

# The Crazy Old White Man from the Hood

Lee Gaylord



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This book is dedicated to the memory of my father, F.R. "Bud" Gaylord, who saved my life after he left this world.

## About the Author

Lee Gaylord was born on October 15, 1944, in Indianapolis, Indiana, USA. He is not an old man, but close to it. He is not crazy, but some might disagree. He is not white. No one really knows what he is. His parents were white, but many people who know him say that he is just Lee.

He was raised as an Episcopalian and at one time thought about becoming a minister.

The following pages will tell you everything you want to know about Lee and maybe more than you want to know.

Lee can be contacted through his web site: http://crazyoldwhitemanfromthehood.com or by e-mail: leegaylord@yahoo.com

Lee also has a website, http://castleofhopeforlostsouls.org, which is the site for the "Castle of Hope for Lost Souls." This is going to be a rehabilitation center for drug and alcohol abusers. It will also help lost souls in other ways.

The names of the characters in this book have been changed to protect the innocent and his derriere.

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### FOREWORD

Downtown Detroit is being reborn. The Detroit Police Department has made it safe. There are casinos and many places for entertainment. We have one of the best baseball stadiums and one of the best football stadiums will open. It has become a party city.

The neighborhoods are getting better too. The young people are tired of seeing their friends killed and put into wheelchairs. The gangs are on their way out. They are quieter and more courteous on the buses.

We still have drug, homeless, and prostitution problems. We still have the lost souls of the streets. The cities, suburbs, rural areas, states, countries, and world still have the problems caused by drugs, alcohol, racial, religious, and ethnic problems.

The purpose of this book is to open the reader's eyes to the problems of the lost souls and to help them find their true selves. The proceeds from this book will go to the rehabilitation of the drug addicts, alcoholics, homeless, runaways, abusers, and the fight against prejudice. My time will be spent on this fight, too. The book and I cannot do it alone. I will need your help.

If you have friends on drugs, look for ways to help them. If you have friends that show prejudice, talk to them and try to set them straight. If you see child abuse, report it. Spread the word on the Internet that prejudice must go in order for the world to have peace.

This book will introduce you to the lost souls that I know and just maybe you will want to help those you meet. I am starting the "Castle of Hope for Lost Souls." More information about it can be found on

the Internet at www.castleofhopeforlostsouls.org along with some of the stories that are at the end of the book.

The book is in two parts. The first part is a story about the crazy old white man from the hood and the lost souls in his life. The second part consists of essays and words of wisdom from the crazy old white man.

# CHAPTER 1 The Early Years

I am starting here because the earlier years were not too exciting. I remember listening to radio before we got a TV. The old radio shows with their sound effects that let you visualize in your mind what was happening in the stories. I remember my father's 1949 Buick and when you were stuck in the snow, you could push a button and cinders would cover the snow behind the tires.

My father always bought the cheapest house in the most expensive neighborhoods. I lived in wealthy neighborhoods. I went to parties at mansions and country clubs. Many of my friends had swimming pools in their backyards. I was hob-knobbing with the rich kids whose fathers were, in some cases, famous.

In the mid '50s I lived in Atlanta, Georgia, for two years (eleven to thirteen years old). It changed my life in a way that I really did not notice until about twenty-five years later.

At that time Atlanta was segregated. I call it apartheid. Water fountains were brown and white as were the bathroom doors. I had to ride in the front of the bus. The blacks I saw were maids, dishwashers, elevator operators, bus boys, porters, laborers, and other low-paying jobs, or were on a chain gang.

Blacks could not eat in white restaurants unless it was in the kitchen. Even churches were segregated.

My father's office was at a truck yard and warehouse for a big nationwide trucking company. He ran their truck leasing operation. On Saturdays I would go with him to work. I found myself talking to the guys that would load and unload the trucks. They were all black.

The restrooms had brown and white doors. The brown doors were for blacks and white doors were for whites. I had to go so I headed for the restroom. The closest men's room had a brown door and I was in a hurry.

A black man said, "Mister Lee, go to the white restroom. The white man might kick your ass if he catches you."

I said, "That's too far. I've got to go now." Luckily a white man did not see me.

I was on a bus. The bus was full and I was on the line between black and white. An old black lady got on and was standing by me. Since my seat was on the border I figured I would give it to her.

She said, "No, sir, please stay seated."

The old redneck next to me said, "If you get up, I will kick your ass."

What really made me mad was that I preferred the back of the bus.

I lived just outside of the city limits. One day some white men with shotguns and black men in stripes and shackles were walking down the street picking up trash, patching holes, and cutting the weeds on the city property. It's funny that all of the white guys looked like fat rednecks chewing tobacco and spitting on the street with brown uniforms and shotguns.

I walked up to the closest guy with a shotgun and asked, "What did these guys do to get on a chain gang?"

He answered, "A lot of crimes including armed robbery and murder."

I went back to my yard.

My best friend lived with his family at the stables behind my house. They were the caretakers for the judge who owned the stables. They were black and lived in a one-room stone house with dirt floors, no electricity or running water. There was a potbelly stove in the middle of the room for heat and cooking, an ice box for refrigeration, and some crops, chickens, cows, and pigs for food. He was a couple of years older than me (about fifteen). He did not go to school.

I asked his mother, "Can Billy come to my house and play?"

She said, "No, Mister Lee. He can't go to your house."

I said, "My parents said it's okay with them."

"Mister Lee, the white folks around you would turn against you and your family. Best not let any of them know that you even come here. The judge asked about you and I thought I was going to have to send you home but the judge said it was all right and not to worry."

He had a bull calf. One day Billy said, "You want to ride the little bull?"

"Sounds like fun to me, Billy. Let's do it."

We put the two-by-four boards across both openings to the barn and took the calf into the middle. I got on and it took off for the one end. We figured it would turn around at the end, but it went through the bottom boards and the top board, hitting my gut, stopped me.

Billy called out to me, "You okay, Lee? Just lay there a minute and we'll see how you are."

I was out of breath and had no choice but to lay there for a while. I was okay.

I looked at Billy and said, "Your turn, Billy."

The calf didn't go far and we brought him back. This time we went to the corral that had more room and we rode him there. There were no more injuries except a few bruises.

We did have fun, though. We not only rode the bull calf (my mother wasn't happy about all of the bumps and bruises), but we rode horses and pigs too. I was always bringing home rabbits, birds, snakes, lizards, and turtles.

One day I was watching TV playing with a three-foot green snake that I had. The kid next door came by and asked me to come out and play. I forgot about the snake that was in a large planter on the table and went out.

My mother came in the room and saw the snake on the table. She picked it up and took it into my room and put it in its cage. After coming out of my room, she realized what she did and screamed.

Where I lived we had woods and ponds. We built forts, rafts, and dams. We would swim in the ponds and there was a pool within walking distance from the house. I had a soap box derby racer and I could go miles with it because of all of the hills. A cop pulled me over one time for speeding.

I had a friend whose bedroom had a glass wall that opened to a balcony. You could see the Chattahoochee River about five hundred feet below. We would go down and wade into the river. We would find Civil War artifacts in the woods. I found a Civil War bayonet, but it was lost in the move back to St. Louis. You could see Atlanta in the distance. It looked like a castle on a hill.

Atlanta was a beautiful city, but the bigotry made it ugly.

I had a lot of fun, but I saw how my race could be so stupid as to think they are the human race and the blacks were inferior animals.

When I left Atlanta we went back to St. Louis where I spent most of my childhood. I went into high school and found that I preferred being with blacks. High school was one-third black. I did not date much because I was attracted to the black girls and I could not date them. The black guys became my friends in school but we could not mix outside of school. I had some white friends that lived near me.

When I was in high school the teachers would always tell my parents that I was so nice and so good. I never got caught. I wasn't really bad but I wasn't an angel either.

When my mother worked, I would skip school and have poker parties at the house. I wouldn't play but I would collect a fourth of the pot. I sold cinnamon-flavored toothpicks, candy, and other things.

One time I made a box filled with two wires, rolled up. Each side had two connectors. I told the guy to run an antenna wire from the TV to the box, then hook the antenna to the other side. I told him TV reception would be a lot better and he paid me ten dollars for it. The next day he said it worked great.

My best friend was Ben. He was an artist. His work was 1930s cars and small towns. He also had a collection of old car parts that he used for his works of art. (I talked to him a few years ago and now he is an artist and hippie in Vancouver.)

Jim lived two doors down. He used to live next door to my dad's partner whose son Bob was my age. When I went over to Bob's house, Ben, who lived near Jim and Bob, would come over and we had a lot of fun causing hate and discontent.

One night Jim said, "The man on the corner with the tennis court won't let us cut through his yard to get to Jerry's house."

I said, "We can't let him get away with that. What if someone waxed his tennis court?" We went out and got a bunch of cheap

candles. At two in the morning we went to his tennis court and rubbed the candles all over the court.

Seven years later I was in another state working in the print shop at the college I went to. The new president came in. I heard he lived near where I used to live.

I said, "I think I used to live near you. I lived in Warson Woods." He said, "I lived in Kirkwood. Here is my house." I looked at it and the tennis court beside it and realized that he was the one we waxed. Small world, isn't it?

Bob moved out of town. Jim moved two doors down the street from me.

Ben had a 1935 Ford four door and a 1949 Chevrolet. It was the first hydromatic sold. The 1935 was in good shape; the 1949 was multicolored and named "Halitosis." On the rear it said "halitosis is better than no breath at all." Jim had a 1931 Ford sedan. I just had my mother's 1960 Falcon.

We went into a grocery store and went to the meat counter. Ben and Jim got on their hands and knees and were slowly running their hands on the floor and looking closely at the floor. I went to the meat counter and started throwing the meat around.

The manager came running up to me and asked, "What do you think you guys are doing?!"

I looked at him and said, "I am sorry about the confusion, sir. My friend lost his contact lens."

"Oh," said the manager, "what can I do to help?"

I answered, "Keep everyone away from this area. We need brooms. My two friends and I will watch as your stock boys slowly and lightly sweep the floor. I didn't find them up here so I am sure it is on the floor. Step very carefully. I will get on my hands and knees and make sure you do not step on it."

So he got the brooms and stock boys. Others kept the customers from going through.

A crowd gathered. People asked, "What are they looking for?"

"A contact lens," one answered.

Another said, "What is a contact lens?"

"It's a lens that goes in the eye instead of in glasses."

"Doesn't it irritate the eye?"

"No, they put a liquid in the eye to keep it from irritating it."

Finally, Jim said, "I found it!" He acted like he picked it up and put it in his eye. He even got a tear to come out of his eye.

I thanked the manager and everyone else for their help and we left. The meat counter was a mess and the floor was full of piles of dirt. The people were standing there still trying to figure out what happened.

We got outside and started laughing. We laughed so hard that it hurt.

From the fifth grade through the ninth grade I was always the biggest guy in school.

In the fifth and sixth grade I played YMCA football. I played tackle. On defense I went for the quarterback and he rarely had time to pass. On offense I cleared a hole for the runner, held step back and block for a pass or trade with the fullback to gain three yards. Once they knew I was coming I could only make two yards. Whenever it was fourth and two or less, or if we had two yards for a touchdown, I would be fullback. Sometimes to surprise the other team I would go around end.

My sophomore year ended my dynasty. Jack came to my school. He weighed 350 pounds and was not fat. You could hit him in the gut and he would not flinch. Your hand would hurt and he would laugh at you. I weighed 250 pounds.

In football practice he would be against me because I was the closest to him in weight. In tackling practice he would pick me up and throw me down like I was nothing. In blocking practice he would hit me and knock me up in the air and on my back. Luckily I got a bad case of blood poisoning and was out too long to stay on the team.

Jack was second in the nation for AAU wrestling, so I did not go out for wrestling because I would have to go against him in practice.

I played sandlot football. We played with few rules. Tackle and no equipment. We sometimes had a bigger crowd than the high school. There was no adult supervision, so we had no problem with parents pushing the kids or crying when the kid got hurt. One of the high school players tried to play but broke his leg. After that the coach said he would throw any player off the team if they played with us.

When I turned sixteen, Jack and I were good friends. We would go to a drive-in restaurant and find a car with four or five in guys in it and piss them off. They would chase us and we would get tired of the chase and pull off the road. They would pull up behind us and we

would get out and start toward their car. They would take off.

Jack bought a stick-shift car. Never drove one before. I showed him how to drive it and we were on our way. He came to a stoplight and when it turned green he stalled. The guy behind us started blowing his horn, which made it worse. Jack got out of the car and went back to the car behind us. Before the guy could raise the window Jack had his keys and threw them in a lake next to the road. He came back to the car and drove off with no problem. Never had a problem again.

Another time the guy behind us had his bright lights on us. He flashed back with the rearview mirror and that did not work. We came to a red light and Jack got out with a hammer, went to the car, knocked out his headlights, came back to the car and drove off. He was a nice guy, but you didn't want to piss him off.

John was six feet seven, weighed 450 pounds, and wore a size twenty-four EEE shoe. His parents had a 1953 Packard limo and a Checker (all model years looked the same so I do not know what year it was). Those are the only cars he could get in the back seat. He did not play in sports because he had a bad heart. He spent most of his time at home.

I visited John often and sometimes his mother would pick me up when I hitchhiked home from school. The three of us could have had a lot of fun if John could have joined us. He would not be able to get into our cars. He did not drive.

When Jack and I would get stuck in the snow, the one that was not driving would sit on the trunk and the other would drive out.

I had a friend, Barry, from third and fourth grade that I hadn't seen since then. I went by his house and he was there. We were both happy to see each other. He had a 1936 Packard hearse. It had a casket carrier in it that he used for a cooler for parties. The top looked like the top of a casket. We came to a light and a guy jumped out of the back. I jumped out with a starter pistol and shot him. He fell and the driver and I threw him back into the casket and drove off.

As we looked back no one moved.

I talked to Barry and later Ben and Jim about getting old cars and staging a 1930s mafia hit downtown. We decided that we might get in too much trouble for it. It would also be easy for the cops to catch the old cars. So we decided not to go through with it.

I love amusement parks and carnivals. The roller coaster is my favorite. Second is the scrambler. When I was in high school I worked for a carnival setting up, running, and tearing down rides.

After the last ride the workers would get on the scrambler. (Three long arms off the center, three arms off the end of the long arms and the tubs with three seats on the end of those. You went in a triangle.) The governor would be taken off so that the ride would go twice as fast. One person on the ride would grab a hat from someone in the crowd and we would play pass the hat.

I would set up, run, and tear down the rides. The Catholic Church fairs were the best. I could send a kid to the beer concession and they would give him a beer for me. Many times we would have a large cooler with beer in the middle of the merry-go-round. We would hop on when it was running and get a beer.

When running a ride, girls would ask for free rides. I would always say, "A ride for a ride." They usually said no.

The worst part about working as a roustabout was when the kids lost their lunch in the ride. I ran one ride and I would jump on when it started and jump off when it was time to stop it.

I got on one time and a kid next to me said, "Aren't you the guy running this ride?"

I said, "Yes."

He threw up on me.

One time when we were tearing down, I was on the center pole for the merry-go-round. It was on a hill and the truck was back up to it. I was on a gear near the top and I was taking a big gear off. I had to pull it up around my body and the pole. As I was trying to get it into the truck, it got stuck between the top of the truck and the pole and pinned me to the pole.

The truck was going to pull up enough for me to get the gear in. Before it went forward it rolled back and the pole started to tip. I could feel that it was ready to fall with me between it and the ground. The truck went forward just in time. Needless to say I did not do that job anymore.

Being a roustabout is fun, but it can be hard and dangerous work.

# CHAPTER 2 The Navy

After high school I went into the Navy. I came home on leave and Ben and I went to a club we used to go to. When we went there before it was a jazz club with a good jazz band. Now it was a coffeehouse for beatniks with folk music. Ben gave the owner some pictures he painted and she was going to put them on the wall and if they sold she was going to split the money with him. The pictures were gone and she denied that she ever had them. The bass player from the old band was there and he said she sold them.

Ben was drafted. He was a pacifist by nature. He got out of boot camp with orders for Vietnam. He went home on leave and said goodbye to his parents and friends and went to Seattle. From there he went to Vancouver. He is still considered a fugitive by our government. He has an art shop and is still an artist and a hippie. I talked to him a few years ago but lost his number. I hope to locate him and maybe he will write a book on his story. What he told me would make a good book.

High school for me was a drag. I had poor grades and I knew I wasn't ready for college when I graduated so I joined the Navy to see the world. The furthest I got out of the U.S. was Key West, Florida. (It is closer to Cuba than it is to the Florida mainland.)

Boot camp was bad for me. I am not the kind who likes to take orders from ignorant people. I got in trouble in boot camp twice. The

first time I had to start over. The second time I was honest about a drill instructor. I was sent to "Mickey Mouse" where I spent two weeks washing clothes and exercising.

When I got out of Mickey Mouse they screwed up and instead of putting me back where I was or making me start over again the put me where I would be if I did not go there. I skipped two weeks.

When I got out of boot camp I went to Electrician's Mate School. On weekends I would go to Chicago and people watch. I would sleep in the mission, Greyhound Bus Depot, or if I had money the YMCA (\$1.25 a night). I hung out in an arcade where I shot pool, a grill called the Meet and Eat, the burlesque theater, and skid row.

I met George in the arcade. I was shooting pool. I was bad too. Not the good bad, I stunk. George just got out of Leavenworth. He was a martial arts instructor in the Army. He was jumped by three guys and killed them in the fight. He was convicted of second-degree murder.

George was having a hard time finding a job. Not many employers hired ex-cons who were convicted of murder. He had a wife and three kids to support. We teamed up to hustle pool on weekends. I was the bad player and he was the almost as bad player. For my part I did not have to sandbag. I was bad. In his case he had to play bad; in reality he was one of the best I have seen.

I let him have my cut. I did not need it.

There was a hooker, Jane. Jane was seven months pregnant and not working the streets in her trade. She was out there panhandling. She became close to George and I. We would help her when we could.

We would meet in the Meet and Eat and she would eat with us. We would buy food for her. I walked in one day and she was with a couple of her friends from the street. I went up to her, yelled at her (she was in on it), put my hand by her face, and slapped my hand loudly. She screamed, acting like it really hurt. Everyone in the place thought I smacked her hard.

I then walked out. No one said anything. No one really seemed to care.

I had been out of boot camp for a couple of months. My hair was fully grown back from boot camp.

I was in Chicago on my last weekend liberty before graduation and I saw three boots (first boot camp liberty) getting ready to go after two good-looking women. One looked in her mid-twenties and the

other was thirty-four (she told me her age later). I was eighteen and the other guys were about eighteen.

I went up to the boots, as they were ready to make their move. They looked up to me because to them I was an old salt.

I said, "There are three of you and two women. Don't you see that you have a problem?"

They each agreed that there was a problem.

I was going to make the problem first. One of the girls was pretty sexy and the other was pretty. The pretty one looked like the more intelligent of the two. I decided I wanted the pretty one. I picked the boot with the most sense to get the sexy one and the other two were out.

I told the lucky boot that I had decided that I wanted the pretty one and he could have the sexy one. There were two problems. First, he had to get rid of his buddies. Second, he had to pay for all four of us.

We went to a movie and dinner and the girls asked us to go with them to the pretty girl's house. We went on the train to one of the suburbs. The boot and I did not get lucky. We had a good time but no sex. I liked the girl I was with but she figured I was too young for her. The sexy one came back with us on the train. She told the boot that she liked me and asked him to leave us alone.

I told her that I was going home on leave and then to Key West so I would not be able to see her again. She asked for my address and gave me hers. We kissed and that developed into letting or fingers do the walking.

Two years later she sent me a letter saying that she was going to visit a friend in Miami. She wanted to come and see me in Key West. She would get a motel room and we could continue where we left off. I told her that it would be fine with me, but it may be the last time we would see each other. I was getting out of the Navy in less than a year and I was not sure where I was going.

She said it was okay with her. She had thought about me and wanted my body. Frankly, I wanted hers too.

After our night together she went back to Chicago.

I got a letter a week later and she said she loved me and she wanted me to come to Chicago when I got out of the Navy. I wrote back and said no.

She got upset and told me that if she could not have me, no one could. She would find me wherever I went and she would get rid of any woman I was with. This worried me. I sent her a nice letter letting her know I was not scared and told her to leave me alone. I never heard from her again.

In the Navy, some called me rackets. I would make money by taking duty for the married men so they could be at home with their wives. I had a deal with the storekeeper to short out the lights so he could take a nap and I would come back when he was rested to fix the lights. I got tools in payment.

One thing that helped me in the Navy was that I knew what I was doing and my immediate superiors liked me. We had a captain for part of the time who was an old mustang. (Old mustangs started at the bottom and worked their way up the ladder.) The lights went out in his quarters. I tried to trace the wires to a fuse box but I could not find it. I found a place to wire it into but that was hot too and I could not find the fuse box for it.

My division officer, who was fresh from officers' candidate school, was not too swift. He was bugging me as I was trying to rewire the lead to the lights. I was working with live wires and I did not need the pain in the derriere that he was causing. Luckily the Captain was there and noticed the problem. He told the division officer that I knew more than he ever would about my job and to leave me alone. He wasn't too happy but he left me alone and I got the job done.

I was transferred to the engine room, which was very hot. (It was between 110 and 130 degrees.) My engine room was powering the ship's electricity. An engine went out and the power went out. I was running back in forth between electrical panels trying to get the power back. I had to adjust the speed of three engines so that they were running at the same revolutions per minute.

The Captain got in my way and I ran over him. An officer tried to stop me and the Captain stopped him and told him I was right. The power was more important than him.

Halfway to New Orleans the propulsion motors and generators went out. My job was to jury rig them so we could get to New Orleans. Enough parts were shipped to New Orleans to repair them so we could make the trip back to Key West. For the four days there I was working on them for twelve hours a day.

I had to work in the bilges, which were full of oily water, and at times the Captain would get in his coveralls and hand me tools. That is one reason I am using a capital "C" for the word "captain." He deserves it.

Our next captain's brain was not fully functional. When the hurricanes came in, we had to go out. Our new captain was on the submarines and never had the command of a large ship. We went to sea to out run a hurricane. On the way back the captain went to the wrong harbor. When he found the right harbor he was bringing the ship into the harbor. The winds were still too high to come in, but he came in anyway.

The wind was pushing us to a pier and a tugboat was trying to keep us away from the pier. The wind won. We hit the pier. The ship had a big hole in the side.

We were on our way to Fort Lauderdale and had some target practice. There was a small ship that we were supposed to shoot at. We shot at it and missed. The next morning the headline was that a Russian trawler was fired on by one of our ships. Of course we denied it.

The Australian frigate captains did not like to use the tugboats. They also did not like to waste time. The frigate was supposed to tie up between our bow and another pier. He had to parallel park his frigate frontward with no room to spare. When he got into position he called all ahead full starboard and all back full port. The props on both sides went all ahead full.

It took a few hours and three tugs with steel cables to pull it off the pier. You could see the steel cables stretching. We stayed low, ready to hit the deck if one broke.

A French destroyer was coming in. They use guns to shoot the lines to the pier. The monkey fist, which is a ball on the end of a smaller line, is shot ashore and picked up to pull a bigger rope to tie the ship to the pier. The first one went a little too far. It went through the admiral's window and landed on his desk. He was sitting at his desk.

I have never seen an admiral move so fast. By the time the gangplank was up he was on the French ship yelling at the captain.

The French were underway and in the middle of the harbor when a French sailor came in a cab and jumped in the water. He swam out to his ship and they threw a ladder down to him to climb aboard.

One thing I learned about the Aussies and the French: they could drink. The French had wine on the ship with their meals. The Aussies had rum. The Dutch had beer. We had homemade wine and what we could smuggle on to the ship. I took a watermelon and cut a hole in it. I then emptied a fifth of vodka in it. That is the only way I liked vodka. (There is a Russian vodka liqueur that is good.)

We had a torpedo man who caught his wife with another man. He decided he wanted to kill himself. He dropped a torpedo warhead eight decks but it did not go off. He then lit a fire under a torpedo warhead. He then started a torpedo's motor and it shot across the torpedo room floor and hit a bulkhead. None of his attempts worked. He knew they wouldn't, but he wanted out. He was given a psycho discharge and sent to a VA hospital for treatment.

While I was in Key West I had a motorcycle and belonged to the Key West Angels MC. We were a club with mostly servicemen and women stationed in Key West. Martha, who weighed about three hundred pounds, was the only civilian member. Her old man was a shrimper.

I had an accident in Miami and my bike was at a gas station there while I recovered from my injuries. Martha said she would take me to Miami to get my bike. She had a Honda 305. That was the biggest Honda at the time. I sat on the back. She was wide so my legs were not in a comfortable position. I do not think the bike was too happy about the five-hundred-pound load. It seemed to be a little on the slow side.

When we got back, we went to a bar where her old man and other shrimpers went. He came in and said something to her that she did not like. She hit him so hard that he went flying out of the bar. (The doors were swinging bar doors.)

He got up and came back in. He said something again and ended up flying out of the bar again.

The third time was a charm. They kissed and made up. I saw a picture of her before she gained the weight. She was Miss Key West in the picture.

Just before you get out of the Navy, they have the shipping over officer try to convince you to re-enlist. Soon after, the captain came up to me and chewed me out for convincing his shipping-over officer to get out. He got out before I did.

The Navy is great for some people. I think every high school graduate should go into the military or an alternative service like the Peace Corps for two years before going to college or entering the workforce. This way they will be more sure of what they want to do and they will be more mature to continue with their lives. College will be easier for them because of the added maturity.

I spent three years, fifteen days, and eight hours in the Navy. When I got out, Vietnam was getting bad. I volunteered but failed the physical.

# Chapter 3

### "I Po?"

After the Navy I went to the Detroit suburbs and soon married a woman whom my mother introduced me to. She was a good-looking woman and she was a good woman. She would have been a good wife for many men, but she was not the right one for me. I am not sorry I married her. She had a lot to do with what I am today and for that I am thankful.

I didn't say, "I do." I said, "I do?"

Ever since high school I wanted to date black women but could not because of society. My first wife was white. I never really loved her, but because of society I could not have what I wanted so I settled for the best of what I did not want.

They were fourteen of the worst years of my life. It was not her fault. It wasn't my fault. It was society's fault.

I was on my way up the ladder. I became a CPA and was close to becoming a partner in a medium-sized high prestige firm. I was going to parties attended by wealthy people. We would go out on large pleasure boats. I had a large house in a subdivision with a lake and a dock with a sixteen-foot sailboat named *For Sail*.

Something was missing—happiness.

Did you ever walk down the street and see someone you wanted to hit in the mouth?

I like to think of myself as a nice guy. The other day I saw myself in the mirror and said, "Self, you are a nice guy." Self is always right, so I must be a nice guy.

But, and that's a big but, every once in a while I run into some clown that has a "holier than thou" attitude. They do not have to say anything. You just look at them and all you see is that "I'm better than you and everyone else" look.

They do not look you in the eye. They look for something wrong with your appearance. They find it and tell you with their eyes that you have the taste of a peon. You look at them with the "I want to pee on you" look. You really want to bust them in the mouth. May even think about kicking them in the balls.

I went to lunch with my senior on the audit, the client's comptroller and sales manager, who fit the above description too a tee, in fact his picture is with the definition of asshole in the dictionary. He talked the whole meal about class, who has class and who doesn't have class. I said, "He who always talks about class has none."

My senior looked like he was going to cry. The comptroller almost fell off his chair laughing. The sales manager got all red and never said another word to me, in fact he would not even look at me. That was better than hitting him in the face.

Have you ever seen a man leading a donkey on a motel roof? That means bring your own ass.

I worked midnights at a motel for a while. I had over 150% occupancy on Friday and Saturday nights. During the week we were filled up with businessmen that stayed all week. The owner was a strict Southern Baptist who did not believe in drinking, smoking, premarital sex, or adultery.

He owned the motel (weekend premarital sex and adultery), a bar (selling drinks and cigarettes), and a restaurant (selling cigarettes). Is this hypocrisy?

On Friday and Saturday nights we made almost as much as during the week. The rooms were full price for two, but during the week they were discounted for one. The men would come in and get the room and say they were alone. We knew better and charged them for two. We had them on videotape if they complained.

The video camera covered the whole parking lot. I could zoom in on the license plates (at the time they were on the front and the back) and write down the numbers. I had a map of the parking lot and I would put the license number and the room number in the parking space.

Every five or ten minutes I would check the lot, and if the space was empty I would call the housekeeper. If the keys were in the room she would clean it and bring the key to me. I would resell the room.

We had coupons for a free drink. They were for Sunday nights when the businessmen came in for the week. When we were full and someone came in, if I felt we would have a room in fifteen or twenty minutes, I would give the guy a drink coupon and tell him I will call him within a half hour for a room. At first the boss was mad when he found out, but when I told him how much more money he was making he said it was a good idea.

One night a guy came in and said he wanted a room for two. When he went to the room I swung the camera to his direction and he had three women with him. I waited for him to get to the room and called him.

I said, "You owe for the other two women, but if you send one down to me I will forget about it."

He laughed and said, "Sure, no problem."

I said, "No, just kidding. With my luck the boss would catch me."

One time a beautiful hooker came in. She had one breast hanging out. My eyes were going from her face to her breast. She realized what was wrong and stuffed it back into her bra.

I said, "It looks good, why cover it up?"

She pulled it back out.

It was really fun when someone I knew would come in. They would say that their wife was in the car. Of course I would look at the woman with the camera. Never was the wife.

One man would come in every Friday and Saturday night.

I asked him, "Wouldn't it be cheaper to get an apartment?"

He said, "That would be too easy to trace."

They were both married.

In telling this I don't want you to think this is good. Don't commit adultery or get a divorce; at least separate from your spouse first. It is a lot better than doing it behind the spouse's back.

I was unhappily married to my first wife and looking for an out. I started drinking heavily and became a drunk.

One morning I came to the car and there was a big dent in the car that looked like a fence post. I didn't know how it got there. I told the wife that it happened in at the mall while I was parked. I don't think she believed me. I didn't care.

Ten years later I was walking down the street and remembered what happened. It was winter and snowing. I turned on a street and ended up caught in a barbed wire fence. I had to pull the fence post off the car. I had to move the barbed wire so that I could back out.

Another time I was traveling on a winding road. It was raining and three in the morning. I went around a ninety-degree turn and spun out. I ended up with my rear bumper at some guy's front porch. I had about a hundred feet to get to the road. The ruts from my back tires had to be four inches deep.

I was in a bar and a man and a woman were talking, smiling, and kissing. Another woman came in and started yelling at the man. She was the wife. She smacked the guy and he left with his tail between his legs.

She and the other woman started talking to each other. They started laughing and left together to go out on the town.

The wife was unhappy at our house because it was too far from shopping. We had lake privileges, but she and the kids spent the summer in Canada and did not use the beach and boat. I loved it. I would come home from work and go out on the lake sailing. I told her we could sell the house and move closer to town but we were going to get a smaller and less expensive house and I would start my own CPA practice.

I had just started my own CPA practice and my first client was a topless bar. The owner, Jack, made Homer Simpson look like a winner. He was lucky once. A bomb was planted in his car and his bartender went out to start it. Luckily the bartender didn't close the door when he started it. A bomb went off and he lost his legs. The open door saved his life.

I was a drunk. I had an office in the suburbs. I would leave at noon and go there for lunch at five in the afternoon; at six or seven I would head for home. He could not pay me so I had an open tab. At the end of the month we would burn the tabs.

I was drinking double 151 rum and Coke. A fight broke out and a body went flying over my head. I ordered another double. I had a Kiwanis Club meeting, so I left to pick up the neighbor and take him.

We got to the meeting and the 151 hit me. I was supposed to introduce him so I got up and forgot his name. I said, "Gentlemen, I would like you to meet, uh uh uh...who in the hell are you?" I never went back.

The darling wife and kids were at her parents' cottage in Canada. I would leave Saturday morning and come home Sunday night. I noticed that the night bartender was not closing the till when he rung up a sale. This is the first sign of a bartender skimming. I noticed that the nights were much busier than the days. The money turned in from the night shift was less than the day.

I told Jack and had him switch to nights for a week. The money in the night was now more than the day. Day sales went down while the number of customers stayed the same. The bartender was fired. The word in the street was that he blamed me and was going to kill me. I got the word back to him that I tried to save his job for him and he thanked me.

He was known for breaking both legs with one swing of the baseball bat that he kept behind the bar.

One problem Jack had among many was that there was a biker club a block away and the bikers would come to the bar often. Jack had a good working relationship with the president of the club. Jack would let them in the bar and they would not destroy it. He added a second thing. They don't mess with the accountant.

I was sitting in the bar and a fight broke out. I was calmly drinking my beer when I saw a body flying at me. I ducked just in time as it went over my head and landed on the fool behind the bar. He moved, so I figured he would survive and I continued drinking.

One day an IRS agent was coming in. I told Jack to go to the clubhouse and not come back until I called for him.

The agent came in and I had him sit by the stage. He ordered a burger, fries, and a beer. Between dances the dancers came to our table and sat with us and on his lap. They made him feel at home. Plumb forgot about what he was there for. This happened once a week for a month. He never did tell me what he wanted.

A couple of months later Jack called me and said, "Lee! I almost killed a couple of IRS agents!"

I said, "What happened, Jack?"

He told his story. "These two agents came with an order to supply my records. The one guy threatened me and I was ready to get my gun. The other one was okay and he said to give you a power of attorney and bring the records."

I went to the IRS. I met the two clowns that almost died from stupidity.

I gave them the power of attorney and they said, "Where are the records?"

I said in a calm and collective voice, "You two harassed my client. It sounded like the old good guy/bad guy routine."

The one said, "We saw it on TV the night before and thought we would try it."

My look was stern; in fact, it was my best you-pissed-me-off look and I said, "You are lucky to be alive. Someday you are going to try that with the wrong person and get your but shot. If you ever pull that shit on another one of my clients again, I will see to it that your asses are out of work."

(Before I continue I want everyone to know that most IRS agents are dedicated and intelligent. They are good at what they do. I have had problems with only four agents. I even did income taxes for some agents. I have found that if you treat an agent with respect and are honest with them, you will get the same treatment.)

I told them, "There were no records. I can get the purchases from the vendors, printouts for other expenses, and bank records for the three years. I can get the sales tax returns from the state. I know the W-2 forms were filed so I will get them from you and do the quarterlies based on them."

The W-2 forms were in a warehouse in Cincinnati, if they were not on computer tape, they were never put in the system. (Not true anymore but back then it was.)

I got what information I could and estimated three years of tax returns. His wife worked and had withholding taxes. On the returns I noted that certain figures were estimated and explained how I did it. He got about three thousand dollars back.

The bar was going down the tubes. Jack was an alcoholic and gambling addict. The bikers had to be kicked out. I convinced him that he should sell out. I hated to do it because I would have to start paying for the booze unless I could put together a deal where I would run it for a percentage.

I got another CPA and a lawyer I knew.

The CPA and I came in for lunch. It was slow, so the dancers spent their time with us. The barmaid came over and showed a gun in her belt. She said, "You may want to leave. I may have to blow the guy away at the bar." My man did not want to stick around. Later that day a woman came in high on drugs. They would not serve her so she wiped out the cars in the parking lot with her car, mine included.

A van that was among the casualties was owned by the president of the biker club. Before anything could happen, about twenty cops came in. They were all laughing. They heard the call and thought it would be fun.

My car was a '64 Pontiac Lemans. I paid five hundred dollars and her insurance company gave me what I paid and let me keep the car. It was damaged on both sides but it ran and got me where I wanted to go.

The next day the lawyer came in. He had a young associate with him. He asked me to let the guy take my car to the office to get his car and he would drop me off to pick up my car when we were finished. As the guy was driving away he asked how both sides got banged in. I told him about the woman and how she knocked my car into the one next to it and totaled both of them.

For some reason he was worried about his car. I told them both that if they put in the money I could run the place. We would each get a third. I could handle the bikers. The president and most of the others liked me. I had talked to them and they said they had the clubhouse fixed up so the would not hang out there anymore. If they came in it would be without colors and only two or three of them.

One of the new members tried to hassle me by trying to get me to buy him a drink. I told him I would kick his ass if he didn't leave me alone. The other bikers told him he was on his own. The next day he had a broken leg and apologized.

The deal did not go through. I couldn't convince the bikers that it was a safe deal.

Today the bar is a big money maker. I met my second wife there after the new owner took over.

A lady I knew was going to buy a bar. She tended bar at a topless bar that a biker club hung out at. I knew a few of the members and I got along with them.

The bar she was buying was down the street from where she worked. I went in to talk to her about doing her bookkeeping and taxes. After she left I was talking to the bartender. We noticed that about ten bikers pulled up and she was worried. I stayed with her and talked to the bikers. I knew them and it made her feel better. Just as they were getting ready to leave, four more came in from another club. Again, I knew them too.

I noticed some friction between the two groups. I talked to both groups and they left. I stayed for a while longer and left.

Bikers can be a big problem. Some of the gangs deal with drugs and firearms. One thing I have always done is treated everyone with respect and as an equal. Because of this I can usually get along with everyone, even if they are bad guys.

I have spent my life studying people. In order to study people you have to be liked by people. I have known good people and bad people. I have noticed that there is some good in everyone. Well, almost everyone. There is also some bad in everyone.

Whenever you meet someone that you don't like, look for something that is a redeeming quality. Use that quality and you may have a new friend. And then again he may be an asshole with no redeeming qualities.

Somehow I never got a drunken driving ticket. I never got pulled over for it. I would leave my office at eleven in the morning and go to the bar for lunch. I would leave the bar at five in the afternoon and be home by six. As soon as I hit the door I was drunk.

# CHAPTER 4 Strike Two

I went into the bar that Jack sold and on stage was my future wife number two. She looked like Donna Summers. She is the most beautiful woman I've ever known. She was intelligent, black, and beautiful. (I later wore a t-shirt that said, "The love of my life is My Black Beauty.") She had everything I wanted in a woman. (She also had the best damn booty I ever did see.)

Ebony was a dancer and an ex-cop. She would have a customer put his drink on her booty and dance without spilling a drop. That is booty.

Suddenly I went from the lily-white suburbs to the mostly black hood in Detroit. My friends went from one hundred percent white to ninety-nine percent black. I found that I was suddenly happy. (I also found out that white folks don't know how to have fun.) I felt as if I was finally with my people. (Ten years later I was told by two psychics that I had a black soul in a white body. I was supposed to be a black man but I got the wrong body. Now I know what transsexual means when he says he is a woman trapped in a man's body. )

Many of my experiences are in the following pages along with my philosophy. I hope you read them all and learn from them.

When I went through my first divorce I was broke. Ebony supported me for about six months until I got on my feet. I got a job with an accounting firm and had some clients of my own. The day I

left the first wife I quit drinking to excess. I married Ebony about a year after the divorce.

Before we go on I want it understood that not all biker clubs are bad. The American Motorcycle Association sanctions clubs that are not outlaw clubs. The Over the Hill Gang is a club with members over forty and in the early sixties I was in the Key West Angels, which had mostly servicemen.

I have known many bikers good and bad and I am not going to mention names of clubs or members. I do not know real names or addresses. All files relating to the bikers I did business with are long gone. Most of the bikers are in prison or dead.

Most of the white bikers do not like blacks. My ex-wife knew one that liked her almost as a sister. When he heard that she was getting married he went by the bar where she worked and said that he wanted to meet me. She called me and asked me to come and meet him.

We got along well and he gave us his blessing. He told me that this meeting never occurred. This man looked like a very nice man. He looked like professional type. He was well groomed and well spoken. A few years later I saw him on TV. He was number one on the FBI's ten most wanted list until he was caught that day. He was the national president of one of the most notorious clubs.

I did the taxes for bikers that were also truck drivers. Most were in the same club. It was a club that was thought to be involved with drugs. The Feds thought that they sold drugs at the truck stops.

The first encounter was with a man who had a truck. I only met his wife. I was working for the firm that would later become mine. The boss asked me to try to collect some old unpaid accounts and his was the first. His wife answered the door and let me in. She called him into the room and he was big and tough looking. It turned out that he was real nice and he paid the money and apologized for being so late.

He was the president of the club.

I set up a trucking company for the widow of the previous president. She was in her fifties and had a high-paying job with one of the auto makers. She bought a few trucks. She financed them all. Club members were the drivers for her company.

I got a subpoena from a US attorney for the records. I took what I had in and the man said that the money for the trucking company was from her husband and the club's drug business.

They had confiscated the trucks.

I told him that according to her income and the fact that all of the trucks were financed, there wasn't much of a chance that the drug money was used. There is no unexplained income. There are statements from the companies that the loads were hauled for. Everything seemed to be in order. The US attorney returned the trucks.

A week later IRS confiscated the trucks for suspected tax fraud. A tax attorney took over her case and the last I heard she got the trucks back. If the government wants you for something and they cannot get you, the IRS tries to get you.

A few accounting businesses had been robbed in the area, so I carried a .38. A biker came in. I had known him from Jack's Lounge. This guy was a pussycat but he looked scary.

When he left, the receptionist said, "Lee, will you handle the money?"

"I can't have the interruptions while I am with a client. If you want you can have the gun."

She said, "No thank you."

I said, "If you are worried about the last client, don't, he is a nice guy and a friend."

She felt better.

Ebony's great grandmother was a voodoo queen. If you do not believe in voodoo, this may change your mind. I know that I would not want to piss this woman off.

She never saw a doctor until she turned 100. She went to the hospital and sent her grand niece to get the money for the hospital. She did not trust the banks and stashed her money at home.

She said, "The money is in my hope chest under the bedroom window. Find out how much you need and pay the hospital bill."

The grand niece went to the house and the hope chest did not have any of the money in it. Before going back she saw her Uncle Billy had just bought a new car. He bragged that he paid cash. He also had a new high-priced suit on.

The grand niece went back to the hospital and told her great aunt about the missing money and Uncle Billy's car.

She said, "Billy will get his for what he did."

Billy was driving his new car and showing it off and it quit on him. He was towed to the shop and the mechanic could not figure out what was wrong. He put the car on the hoist and when it got to the top it fell off and smashed Billy's legs.

At that time the nurse heard Great grandma say, "Gotcha."

It looked like we were going to have a problem finding a preacher to perform the wedding ceremony. They did not want to do mixed marriages. I found a minister at my parents' old church in the suburbs. He marched with Martin Luther King. He was white and he was involved in the civil rights movement.

He said that he would do it if we were married in his church. I told him that he would lose his church if we did it there. I told him we were doing it outdoors at her parents' house. They had a double lot and the basement was big enough for the reception when the bugs drove us into the house.

My mother, brother, sister-in-law, and my new wife had birthdays within a week of the wedding so we had a birthday cake and a wedding cake.

The day of the wedding it was raining lightly. A half hour before the wedding, the rain stopped. When the minister pronounced us man and wife, the sun came out.

Our honeymoon was in Toronto and Niagara Falls. In Toronto we took a carriage ride from the hotel to a Chinese restaurant that was the biggest restaurant I have ever seen. The honeymoon was wonderful and it looked like we were going to have a long life together.

My new family had a lot of parties. These parties were fantastic. When I got married, my boss, who looked like Robert Gullet, was my best man. He said his girlfriend could not come so he was going to bring his wife. (They were going to get a divorce soon.) I told him that 50 of the most beautiful women would be there. He brought his wife and she messed up his evening. He still said when he remarried and asked my wife and me to come that his would not be as much fun as our wedding. We didn't leave until five in the morning and the last people left at eleven in the morning.

My children from the first marriage learned that there was another society. They saw the poor and down and out. They found out that the poor black kids are no different than the wealthy white kids. When they were with me they were with blacks. They saw people on drugs

(black and white) and learned what drugs can do to a person. They saw people eating out of garbage cans.

The divorce decree said that I could not be with the kids in the company of an unwed woman (my girlfriend). After the wedding I had it changed to every other weekend and every other holiday. The first time the kids met my wife they really liked her. They said she was beautiful. I told them on the way home not to say anything about how good she was. If they asked them, they were to just say she was okay. My daughter said, "Oh, Mama, she was so nice and beautiful." Their mama blew a gasket.

The next visitation weekend she said they did not want to come. I took her to court.

Before she and her lawyer came in, the judge, my lawyer, another lawyer, and I were talking. The judge said, "Yesterday a woman was brought before me for non-payment of child support. The son had six months before he was eighteen. The husband said the support could go into a trust fund and when he turned eighteen it would go to the son. She said no so I had to send her to jail."

She and her lawyer came in and the judge asked my lawyer to talk. He told her how the ex-wife would not let the kids come because they suddenly decided they did not want to come. He said that the kids were too young to make that decision. He was quick and to the point.

Her lawyer got up and surprised everyone. He said, "Your honor, I realize I am probably wrong, but here is my case. She took the children to a child psychologist and this is her report."

He gave the judge a report that said the mixed marriage was bad for them.

The judge blew a gasket and said, "I don't care what the psychologist said. She is wrong. It is not up to the children if they see their father, but it is up to me. He bought a bigger house and built a bedroom in the basement so they would each have a bedroom. You will make the children go with their father."

If this wasn't bad enough she added, "The next time you come before me in the matter, bring the kids and I will teach them the facts of life. If you come again, bring your toothbrush and the kids because you will go to jail and your ex-husband will get custody."

As if it was timed, as soon as she said it the woman she talked about earlier was brought into the courtroom in shackles.

She did everything she could to turn them against me. She especially got upset when her husband complimented my wife.

We had many problems when we went to the suburbs. Restaurants would give us poor service. Whites who came in after we did would get served first. We found glass in our food. We got dirty looks. When we would go into some places all eyes would be on us. Sometimes they were thinking either she was Donna Summers, how beautiful she was, or something bad. I said, "At least we are the center of attention."

We did get some compliments too. In the city we would be remembered when we would come back and be treated well.

We were in a grocery store and a gay couple came up to us. One said, "You are a beautiful couple. We are watching the acceptance of mixed couples because we feel once you are accepted we will be close behind."

I was on the way up to my parents' house about a hundred miles north of the city. My wife and our nephew were with me. A cop was on the median facing the south. He turned around and came after us. The speed limit was fifty-five and I was doing seventy. I pulled over and the cop got out.

My nephew said happily, "The cop is black. We have it made."

I looked at him and said, "Look at me."

He said, "Oh I forgot. We're in trouble."

The cop said there was a car going the other way. One of us was doing sixty-five and the other seventy. He gave me a ticket for sixty-five.

Ebony said, "It would have been easier for him to get the other car but since we were a mixed couple he came after us."

I agreed.

A man came into the office. He said he was four years behind in taxes and got a notice from IRS. He worked for an elevator repair company and fell ten floors four years before. He spent six months in the hospital and has not left his home since he got out of the hospital. The letter from the IRS forced him out. After I took care of his taxes I never heard from him again. He probably stayed in his house for another four years until he got another notice from IRS.

Our son is a very intelligent young man. When he was in kindergarten he was one of two mixed children in the school. The rest

were black. He was as light as me if not lighter. He came home from school and asked, "Mama, am I black or am I white?"

Mama said, "You are black."

He put his arm next to mine and said, "If I am black, then Daddy's black."

When he was born, his birth certificate said he was black. Today it would say white because he looks white. Blacks know he is mixed and whites think he is white. Why don't they say black/white?

There is one thing that a mixed child should never do. Pass for white. My son probably could. There is one big problem. If you marry and a baby comes along, the baby may look black. If you are a woman, the husband will accuse you of sleeping with a black man. If you are the man and she slept with a black man, she would say that it is the other guy's kid. If she did not sleep with a black guy then she knows you are black.

My father-in-law is the wisest man I know (except my father). He reminds me of Lou Gossett, Jr. He looks like him, sounds like him, and acts like him. He quit school in third grade to work in the coal mines and took care of his family, but he was wiser than the most educated people.

Wisdom comes from life, not school. All of the education in the world cannot make a person wise. I wish I could write some of the things he said but a white man cannot say it the way he did.

My mother-in-law was prejudice against whites. She would forget that I was white and say things in front of me then apologize. I told her not to worry because she was right. Many of my friends did not like whites but I was accepted. If anything was said they said I was not white. Didn't know what I was, but I wasn't white.

My wife's uncle (now her aunt) dressed as a woman. He took hormones to give him breasts. In his day he could convince any man that he was a woman. He did look as good as a woman. When the wife met a guy, she would go to his house and leave the guy with him, go downstairs and visit friends. When his hands got to the genitals, there would be a scream and she would dump the guy.

Things were going good for us. I became a partner and a year later bought out my partner. I had a nice house in one of the best neighborhoods of the city.

One day a big caddie pulled up to my office. A big black man in a high-priced pin-striped suit got out with a lady. They were starting a loan company and they wanted my help. The next meeting was at a motel and I met the owner of a large realty and mortgage company. They also had a letter from a prominent widow (real rich).

The banks were against them. They carried guns and including automatics. I got into an argument with them and we broke off our dealings.

A while later I heard on the radio that there was a gunfight at a nearby motel.

The paper said that they were con artists. The reporter called me because they found my card. He did not use the interview because he was saying that they were con artists. My story was that they were actually starting a loan company.

This is the street version that I believe. The sons loved their mama and you did not touch her in a threatening way. Before the cops came, they were told that there was a contract out on the mother and a cop was going to be the hit man. The cops had a warrant for a bounced check. The cop that was killed grabbed Mama's arm and the sons started shooting. The son I met was her number-one son. He had a bad case of diabetes and when the trial came he was in a wheelchair. He died soon after. Mama and the other sons are in prison.

Whenever I went to any branch of my bank and deposited checks, they never put a hold on them. We had a branch close to my home and I went in there often and they never put a hold on my deposits.

My wife went in and they told her they were putting a hold on the checks. (Two of the checks were from that bank.) It was a black teller and assistant manager.

When she came home and told me I went back to the bank and complained. I told them it was a clear case of discrimination. I had them call the branch manager where I had my account and he told them never put a hold on my deposits.

One time we gave a retirement party for my father-in-law. We rented a hall that held two hundred people. The DJ cancelled out on a higher-paying gig to do our party. We invited one hundred seventy-five people and two hundred twenty-five came.

Our parties had all kinds of people.

My brother-in-law told me he wanted to dance with a woman. I looked and noticed an Adam's apple. I said, "You don't want to dance with him."

He said, "Every man out there is trying to dance with her. I want to dance with her."

Again I said, "You do not want to dance with HIM!"

"You mean that's a man."

"Yes."

One of the most beautiful women on the dance floor was a man.

I had become a partner and then I bought my partners out. My partner was supposed to take care of the business end and I took care of the clients and the third partner retired. We, now I, owed over thirty thousand dollars and over thirty thousand dollars was never billed. Some clients owed close to a year in services rendered. A couple of clients ended up owing money for taxes that were not paid by the firm but the client paid the firm.

In all I ended up having to pay about forty thousand dollars and I was able to only collect about five thousand dollars. The rest of the amount owed had to be written off because of trading services with my partner.

My office was in a predominately redneck suburb. I had two white tax preparers working for me and they both left at the beginning of tax season. I hired two black men and my wife came to work for me.

Willy, the second one I hired, said, "Lee, you can't hire me."

I answered, "Why not?

He answered, "Most of your clients are rednecks. You will lose clients."

I said, "Willy, you need the job. Howard worked here last year and he was well liked. I know we will lose some but I also feel we will gain some. If we change one redneck's mind it will be worth what we lose."

He had a car in a week. He also had a gambling problem and a drug problem. He made it to work on schedule so I did not notice a problem until he came by the house with a hooker at three in the morning needing money to buy his car back. He lost it in a poker game.

The next day his wife left him.

Last month Howard and I ran into each other at the office supply store. It had been ten years since we had seen each other. He said Willy died of a drug overdose.

The next tax season business dropped in half and I lost the office and had to move into the city. I saw that I was going broke. The wife was insanely jealous. The marriage was going downhill. I did not want her and our son to go down with me, so before we lost everything I signed the house over to her. I had made extra payments and in four years we cut the mortgage in half. Then the equity was about sixty thousand dollars. Add that to the cash and furniture, my half would be over forty thousand dollars. She had a good job that paid well. I let her have it all and left. I feel that I prepaid the child support.

The funny thing is that a psychic (who worked for me) said that I would leave my wife on July 31. We gave no indication that we had a problem. She was right. She also made other predictions that happened. She said I had a black soul. (She was white.)

I left and went broke.

# CHAPTER 5

# I'm Single Again, Thank the Lord, I'm Single Again

Here comes the fun. I was single and alone for the first time in twenty-four years. I was forty-five and starting a new life again.

After split up number two, I met up with a dancer. She went by the stage name "The Whip." We went to her place where she rented rooms to three other dancers. She found out that I was staying in motels and offered to rent a room to me. She said the ladies would clean and cook for me. They were all beautiful, but the other three were lesbians so I only had the one for me.

The Whip and I had finished doing our thing and two of the other women asked if they could join in. Sadly I had to go.

I decided not to move in for many reasons, but the funny thing is my estranged wife told my parents that I lived in a whorehouse. I almost lived with four women. Close.

I went into a bar and there was a dancer on stage. She was tall, slim, and so fine. I gave her a tip while she was on stage. I said, "I'm Lee, act like we are old friends." In a mixed bar, some of the white dancers would get jealous of the black dancers' popularity with the white men. I've had friends who've had their costumes trashed by the white dancers. My fatal attraction, whom you will meet later, had her car vandalized by the other dancers.

She got off the stage and we talked. She said, "I'm Julie." I asked, "Do you have a man?"

Her answer saddened me. "I have a live-in boyfriend that I am trying to get rid of. He is abusive and he was convicted of battery when he pushed me down the stairs. He was sentenced to six months and is supposed to go to jail in a month."

I said, "I am separated from my wife and hope to be divorced soon. I don't have much money, so if that is what you are looking for I am not the one. I want a woman who is not in my pocket. I will not ask you for money. If we get together I will be honest, I will always give you respect, and when you are down I will pick you up. Would you like to go to breakfast when you get off?"

She looked me in the eye and said, "Will you marry me?"

I asked, "How many kids do you want?"

Her answer floored me. "Ten."

My retort was, "Not."

For the next month she would come to the office, my mot, el or we would go to her place when the boyfriend was at work.

I spent a lot of time at the bar and we would sit in a corner where the boss could not see us. We and other dancers would sit, talk, and plot to play practical jokes on other dancers and customers.

One night I came into the bar and went to the dancer on the stage and said, "Baby, it's time to go home. The kids need you. Billy got in a fight and got a broken nose. Jenny fell on her bike. Little Joe is constantly crying, 'Mama.'"

We started arguing. I grabbed her and threw her over my shoulder and carried her out of the bar. The bouncer, manager, and a few of the dancers knew what was happening.

When the guy that lived with Julie went to jail she wanted me to move in. They did not have enough room in jail and he had a good job, so they put him on a tether for six months. He would not move out.

We decided to try to get him sent to jail. I dropped her off by the house and went around the corner. She was going to go in and come to my car and we were going out. We were hoping he would stop her and he would come after me. He did and chased me in his car. I headed for the main road in hopes a cop would stop us. I would say he was chasing me and he would go to jail for violating his probation. I got to the main road and he stopped and went back.

The reason he was in trouble with the law was that he assaulted her; he was smart enough not to hurt her again.

I told her that until she moved out I was not going to see her. She got a place later but it was in the suburbs and cost seven hundred fifty dollars a month. I said, "I can't pay my share of the rent."

She said, "I can pay it. Just pay what you can on the other expenses."

I said, "What happens if you fall on the stage and break your leg?" She got a couple of other dancers to share with her.

My sister-in-law came to me and offered a room in her house next to her parents for seventy-five dollars a month. We were like brother and sister and I moved into her spare room.

She had a cat that was prejudice. She would come out when blacks were there but hide when I came home. It took a week for her to decide I wasn't white. After that she slept with me. (The cat, that is.)

A friend of the ex and mine had a van with Donna Summers on it. He was proud of that van. When he and my wife were together people would ask if that was her on the van. I haven't seen him in a while and I saw the van without him and the van was looking bad. I knew he hung out near where I was living.

It was a topless bar that my ex started dancing at. I went in and I was the only white guy there. The bouncer would not help me until I showed him a picture of my ex and he remembered her. He told me that our friend died of a heart attack.

I got to know the bouncer and started going there. When I came in the guys didn't say much but the women gave me hugs and kisses. Other whites would come in and were not made welcome and left quickly. I asked the bouncer why they did not hassle me and I learned a lesson. He said he spread the word that I was a hit man.

You may be wondering about all of the dancers and topless bars. You may or may not buy this. I am a people watcher. Topless bars have all kinds of people to watch. There are also a lot of lost souls there. To help lost souls you have to go where they are, the bars and the streets.

And along comes the fatal attraction.

I was in a bar and I met Danielle. She was on stage and I gave her a tip. When she got off she came over to my table and introduced herself. I told her my name and told her I was an accountant. (I did tax returns for a few dancers.)

Danielle said, "I am an accountant. I have three years' experience and my degree. I can't find a job because I am a black female. Most white firms would not hire blacks, especially women. The black firms don't pay enough. I make more money dancing. Are you hiring?"

I looked at her and I asked her about her experience. After hearing about what she could do, I said, "I am no longer a CPA. I dropped the CPA because I got tired of the state regulating my business and having to charge clients for the unnecessary work to cover my ass and make the regulators happy.

"I do need some help. I can pay you on a per-job basis when I get paid. If you bring in clients, you will get twenty-five percent of collected billings. If you bring in enough work, do good work, and if we get along, I will make you a partner."

Danielle said, "I will keep dancing until we get going well enough for me to quit. If we don't become partners I will at least have enough experience to go out on my own with the clients I bring in. I will dance until it is big enough to support me."

"I want it to be strictly business."

I agreed and she was supposed to start the following Monday.

The day Danielle was supposed to start she did not show up. I called her mother (who had a hatred for whites), and said she was in a hospital. She would not tell me where or why.

Danielle called and said, "I am in the psych ward at the Osteopathic Hospital. I will be here for at least thirty days. Can you come and visit?"

I said I could and visited her daily. She was manic-depressive and so was her mother, whom she lived with. When she got out she came to work.

She went to Chicago to see her father for a long weekend and had a glass of wine. That and her medication landed her in the Illinois State Hospital. I had a call from her doctor in Illinois and he asked if I could give her a place to stay. She could not stay with her mother.

Danielle moved into the office.

An old girlfriend, Julie, called and Danielle answered. She said, "Leave my man alone, you crazy bitch."

Danielle said to me, "The crazy part was right, but I am not a bitch."

Soon I met a new girlfriend. She tended bar at a topless bar.

The fatal attraction wasn't happy. I came in the office one morning and she was sitting at the desk in only a t-shirt.

She opened her legs and asked, "Do you want this?"

I was tempted. We did have sex once before and decided that we should keep it business. Many times I would be there late and we'd come close, but I decided not to jeopardize the business relationship.

I answered, "Danielle, you know I am involved with someone else and you are the one that said that we should keep our relationship strictly business. I think it would be best if we ended this. I will give you two weeks to find a place to live."

That was not the right answer. She stopped taking her medication and became a nut case. She called the clients and told them to come and get their files. She was going to burn down that building. I lost some business.

I called the police and asked how I could get her out. The cop said, "Throw her and her stuff out."

I said, "Isn't that illegal? She can have me arrested for assault and battery."

The cop agreed and said, "Hopefully she doesn't know that."

I had the locks that she had keys for. I left for a while and left a note on the door telling her she could pick her stuff up at five in the afternoon. When I came back my key would not work. I had a double-pane glass door and an iron-bar door. Her desk was by the door and I saw a paper from the locksmith I used.

I called the company and said, "I had the locks changed in my front gate and door. You then sent someone out to change them again. Why did you come out the second time?"

"The lady said that she rented the place and lost the key. We didn't know that it was the same one we did earlier until you just told me. Someone else took the second order and it was a different locksmith."

I was quite upset and told him, "Now you have to change them again. Did she pay you with a check?"

"Yes, the guy said she had checks with that address on them. That is why he figured it was all right."

I was incensed. I asked him, "If I have your address put on my checks, will you have your locks changed for me?"

He said, "That's different."

I said, "No, it is not. You are supposed to have proof that the person is in a position to change the locks. I had a letter from the owner of the building that I was the tenant and had his approval to change the locks. Now you have to change the locks for a third time and since her check will bounce, you will only be paid once."

He sent a guy right out and I found out later that the check did bounce.

She came at five and I had her stuff out for her. I had the gate locked and the inside door open. She was not happy and started making a scene. The owner of the bar next door called the police. This was the third time they were called because of her and about ten cars came because they all wanted to watch. They helped her put the stuff in her car and they all left.

I had an answering machine tape full of threats at the office. I was still living at the sister-in-law's and she called there. We screened the calls and it was too much for my sister-in-law so I ended up moving into the office. I played the tapes to the police and they said they could not do anything until she followed through with her threats. Her probation officer said if I would have had her arrested for trespassing, she could violate her if she was convicted.

The investigators from AT&T came looking for her for credit card fraud. (She used her mother's card.) I would imagine that they found her. Never saw her again.

The cause for the problem with the fatal attraction was Cassandra. I met her at a topless club I went to. She was the barmaid. She had one problem. She was afraid of the mixed relationship. I found out later that she was only twenty-one. I was forty-six and her mother was thirty-six.

Cassandra, a brother, and I were north of Detroit. It wasn't a good place for mixed couples. My plate expired in the middle of the month. Normally you have till the end of the month before they give you a ticket.

The cop was a sheriff's deputy supervisor in plain clothes. He saw us and pulled us and called in my plate number and found that it was expired and so was my driver's license. I got two tickets and was told to get out of town. The only reason he checked was that we were a mixed couple.

Whenever I rode with her brothers and a couple of friends we would get pulled over by NARCO. They flat out told me that one white man and a bunch of black guys in a car means drug dealer.

Cassandra, her brothers, and I went to pick up a guy downriver from Detroit. On the way back I got pulled over for speeding. The cop sat in his car for a long time and we were wondering why. All of a sudden four more cop cars showed up. The friend in the back looked worried.

Finally the cop came to the car. I gave him my license and registration. (Both were expired, oops.) He gave me three tickets, sent the rest of the police force free, and let us go. The guy in the back seat looked sick. He had a bag of weed with him.

The next time he rode with us, NARCO pulled us over.

Someone left a joint in the ashtray. I saw it when the cop did. I looked at him and he smiled. I smiled and he said, "Don't worry, we are looking for crack."

What really made me mad was that whenever we were stopped the white cops hassled the black guys and the black cop talked to me. The black cops were always nice to me.

One time I let Cassandra's brother use my car. He picked her up at the club and came by my place. I took them home. I was a block outside of the next city. The cops in that city and the cops in my city do not get along. (Big city versus small city cops.) When we went down the alley and on to the street that divides the cities, two cops from the other city were in a car.

When I came back they were still there. They followed me through the alley to my door. They got out of their car and started looking in my car with flashlights. This pissed me off.

I said, "What in the hell do you two assholes think you are doing?" No answer.

I said, "This is my car, my office, my parking lot, and the City of Detroit. If you do not get the hell out of here now, I will go inside and call the real police and have you thrown in jail for trespassing."

They took off because they knew I meant it and they knew the Detroit cops would love to bust them.

Cassandra's mother was a psychic and an astrologer. She made a lot of predictions that came true. She did my chart and looked at me. I asked her what the problem was. She said, "No problem. According to this you are black." (Sound familiar?)

I am a black man in a white man's body. That is why I am the way I am if it is true. She and I became good friends. She worked for me and we spent more time together than Cassandra and I. To me, it was a business and friendship relationship. I had no sexual desires for the mother. She was the mother of the woman I loved.

Cassandra could not handle the pressure of a mixed race relationship. She was dark skinned and she felt her dark skin would make things worse. I could not convince her that there was no problem, especially since we already had problems. Her fear made it impossible for us to be together. We loved each other and her children loved me too. But the fear could not be overcome. We broke up.

I was hanging out at a bar shooting pool. I was there almost every night and I got pretty good. One night I held the table for eighteen straight games. I met up with Valerie.

Cassandra's mother was still working for me. I was living above the office. She came in one morning and Valerie came down. Cassandra's mother could not handle it and quit. She said she loved me and wanted to marry me.

Soon I found out that Valerie was a crack addict. I had drug dealers coming to me to for money she owed.

One time she called me. She said, "Joe is holding me until you come with eighty dollars that I owe him."

I said, "Tell him to bring you here. I have to have someone bring me the money. I will give him the money when he hands you over to me." He said he would send his dog with her to get his money.

The moneyman came to the office when the dealer's flunky got there with her. The moneyman called me on his cell phone from his car (a big Lincoln) and the flunky thought he was mafia.

I got the money and went to the flunky's car. I gave the money to the flunky and I said, "Valerie, get out of the car and get in the office." I looked at the flunky and said, "I know you are just a runner for Joe, so I am not pissed at you. Tell him that if he pulls this shit again he will never be able to pull it a third time because I will have him killed. In the future, before dealing with her, get something of value and call me. I will pay when the item is delivered."

At this time I knew a lot of drug dealers. The word on the street was that I was a crazy old man and not to mess with me. Some of the

dealers spread that word for me so that the others would not mess with me. I am a big guy and in the streets I show no fear and I do not take any BS.

People look at me and they do not want to mess with me. In most places I go I am the only white person around. I cannot be missed.

One night she called me and asked, "Can you come and get me? I want to go to rehab. I am down the street from my mother's house. Please come. I love you, Lee."

I had to call a cab. The driver picked me up and we went to get her. We got to her and she said, "I want a rock before we go to your place."

I said no and she would not get into the car. The cab driver said, "Hey, man, I've been through this and I'm telling you that you are better off getting the rock."

I said, "Okay, we'll get it."

She got the rock and we went to my place. She sat on the bed and smoked her rock. When it was gone she started rocking back and forth. She kept saying over and over, "I've got to have another rock." A little mouse that would sit with me when I worked late came up to her feet and looked up at her.

She saw the mouse and said, "I've got to go to bed." She lay down and went to sleep.

I looked at the mouse and said, "Thank you, my little friend."

It looked at me and went away.

In the morning I went and got my car while she went home. I hadn't met her mother yet because she didn't like white people. I had to go to her house to take my girl to the beauty shop. Mama's boyfriend (her daughter's age) answered the door.

He looked at me with a look that could kill and said, "What in the hell do you want?"

I told him, "I am taking Valerie to get her hair done."

"She'll be out in a minute," he said as he slammed the door in my face.

He came back to the door and told me to come in and wait.

Her mama walked out in boyfriend's shirt and oooooooooeeee, she was nice. She saw my white face and almost did a Fred Sanford. Not a word was said until Valerie introduced us. Then there was only a hello from each of us.

The next morning I took her to detox.

I wrote Mama a letter and told her that I understood her feelings but if she wanted her daughter to get better it would take us both working together. We became friends after that.

Valerie came home after the seven-day detox program. Never went back for the 30-day program.

After the rehab we went to a client's up north. We were told that a bar in Memphis, Michigan, had all-you-can-eat prime rib for \$9.95. We went there on the way home and when we got to the door we could hear people until we walked in. You could hear a pin drop until a guy at the pool table said, "You guys aren't from around here, are you?" Everyone laughed and the party began.

Valerie was a pool hustler and she beat everyone in pool while I ate. She had a few bites while she shot pool then we snuck some food out in her purse.

She was clean for a month. It was a beautiful month. Our love grew and she seemed happy. We talked about marriage. Her mother and I got along well. Her mother was eight years younger than me. She looked twenty years younger. I called her mom and she laughed.

I had seven hundred dollars saved up for a long weekend we were going to take to celebrate. The night before, she said she had some work to do before going. I went to sleep and she disappeared with half the money, leaving a note asking forgiveness. The rest was gone in a week.

When she came home she asked me to lock her in the office/apartment for a week. I brought in her food and she drank a lot of fruit juices. I hated locking her in when I went out because she did not know a way out. It was hard. When I was home I hid the key so if I fell asleep she could not pick my pocket.

After the week was up, she went on another binge.

She tried another week locked up and that did not work. She needed the longer program.

She told me she was going out with her friend. What she did not realize was that this friend was a friend of mine too. Her friend called me and asked for her.

I said, "She said she was going out with you."

She said, "I think she may be with Randy. He supplies her with drugs. Does she have your car?"

I said, "Yes."

She said she would check it out and get back to me. She came by my place and picked me up. She took me to the corner about a half a block from his house and told me the car was in the driveway. It was after midnight. I stole my car.

Valerie called in the morning and asked me, "Do you have the car?"

I said, "No, don't you have it?"

She said, "It must have been stolen. I stayed over..."

I cut her off, "You stayed at Randy's and got high. I guess he gives you drugs for sex. I do have the car. I will come and get my keys. I will also put the word out that Randy is paying for your drugs and not me."

About a year later she called from the hospital. Randy broke her leg and she needed a ride to her mother's house. At the time I did not have a car and could not help her.

I saw her a few years later and she was clean. I heard before that she had a baby and stopped when she found out she was pregnant. The baby is now about seven and last year when I saw them the little girl was real cute and a smart little thing. Valerie put on a lot of pounds, but to me, she looked great.

I spent a lot of time at the Chicago Lounge. It was a neighborhood bar in the hood. I was one of two white regulars.

There was a gay bar across the street. One night a gay guy got lost and came in. The other customers didn't really care. He just sat there with a shit-eatin' grin and listened to the music. (This story is not antigay. I have no problem with gays. What you do is what you do and I have no say. This is in the story because I think it is a funny story.)

One of the older regulars, Cal, came up to me and said, "Lee, see that white gay guy?"

I answered, "Yes, so what?"

"In case you haven't noticed, this is a black bar. He is white and he is gay. That's two strikes against him. Cook was here when it was a white bar. He just never noticed the change in color of the neighborhood and the clientele of the bar. Since he was here first we can't send him away.

"You came here and we all liked you. You were like a brother and a lot of the time we forget that you are white. When we badmouth your race, you agree and you fit in with the conversation. We decided you ain't white and we accepted you.

"The problem is that he has two strikes, Cook has a strike and you have a strike. That, if my addition is right, is four strikes. That is one strike too many."

The white gay guy left and went to the bar across the street. Every once in a while he would come in the Chicago Lounge and sit there with his shit-eatin' grin and enjoy the great music and shoot pool every once in a while.

Sure, he was different. So was everyone else. If you get rid of people because they are different, you will be the only one around. The differences are the things that make us interesting and give us something to talk about.

Cal was shooting a good stick. He held the table for about ten games. I was up and I have been hot lately. We were down to the eight ball and he missed so he started to put his stick up. I had a good sidepocket shot.

I said, "Don't put your stick up, Cal. I am going to miss this one. Cross corner."

He got his stick back and asked, "Why?"

I said, "Because it's there."

That sucker went so fast you couldn't see it go into the pocket.

Cal stood there with his mouth open and said sadly, "You lied. You said you were going to miss it."

I said, "How many times have you been told that you can never trust the white man?"

Smith, the owner, would get mad at me because I would shoot cross corners, cross sides, double bank and combination shots when I had a straight-in shot. I always told him that I needed the practice. But when I did it they were dead shots (a sure thing).

Smith was pushing 70 but he was tall and tough. You did not mess with Smith.

There was a customer that would get drunk and play the jukebox and laugh and dance by himself. He didn't bother anybody so nobody said anything. A young man was in the bar and the dancer accidentally knocked into him. He started yelling at our favorite drunk and everyone in the bar was getting ready to stop it.

The guy was starting to swing and Smith grabbed his arm.

He said, "MF, you are out of here!"

They guy screwed up and said he wasn't going.

Smith was pissed. He grabbed the guy by the collar and the belt and carried him to the door. A customer opened the door but the guy's head was helping. He was thrown out.

Fifteen minutes later he came in and asked for his briefcase. He apologized to Smith and our resident drunk. He bought a round for the bar and stayed until closing.

I was a pretty good player. If I was more consistent, I could have been a pool shark.

I was once told that I had an eye for pool. I could spot combinations and banks that were dead shots. The only problem was that my stick sucked.

As I got better I would shoot real well with the difficult shots but I would choke on the easy shots.

Phyllis was a friend's sister. She had a good stick (and a good body too). The first time we played I had held the table for about five games.

She said, "Don't let up on me. Play your best."

I played a good game but I choked on the eight ball and missed an easy shot.

She said, "You missed that on purpose." Then she sank the ball she had left and got the eight ball.

The next time I came up she broke and I ran the table.

"You didn't have to be so rough on me!"

I figured it was PMS time.

Art would sign in on the board with a drawing of a crown. He said he was the king of pool. I said he was the king of mouth. He would talk the whole game about how he was going to beat your butt.

I came up and he said, "I am going to leave you with four balls on the table."

I looked him in the eye and said, "You pissed me off. When I finish with you that crown will be a piece of shit."

I blocked everything out of my mind but the pool table. I didn't hear the music or Art's mouth.

He only sank one ball on the break, missed his second shot, and then I ran the table.

Art said, "That was a lucky game. I will get you when I get the table back."

To make him feel worse, I played a bad game, lost, and left.

The next night he was there. He still signed in with his crown. He still had a big mouth.

The next game I played the same way with total concentration on the game. This time I ran some on the first turn and the rest on the second. I lost the game after and left.

The next night he came in later than usual and signed in as Art. When he got on the table he wasn't as good as usual.

His buddy said to me, "You really got to him. All he talks about is beating you."

I said, "I noticed he signed in with his name. His mouth is not as active either. Don't worry about it. He will win but he will have to work for it."

I got down to the eight ball and missed. He sank his last two balls and missed on the eight. I had a long shot but straight-in for the eight. I looked at him and his mouth was shut. He looked like he was ready to cry. If I made that shot, I would win the game but break his spirit.

I decided that I was going to shoot the eight ball hard and have it bounce out of the pocket and go across the table and into the other corner. The devil in me said to call it like I was going to do it and the good guy said call the corner I am going to pop it out of. The good guy won.

I shot it so hard and fast that he thought I made it then noticed it went in the other corner.

He shook my hand and was himself again with two exceptions. The crown was gone and the mouth was tamed. From then on I won about half of the games I played him. I went back to shooting pool for fun and enjoying the game and my opponents.

It was about 3 a.m. I was waiting outside of the bar after a night of pool for a cab.

Three guys in a van slowed down and pulled over to the curb a half a block away. The just stood there for a few minutes. I was thinking it was going to be a robbery and I was the only one to rob.

I looked at the van and I reached in my pocket with one hand and motioned to them with the other to come and get me. They probably thought I was reaching for a gun and took off.

Another rule for the hood is if someone is coming toward you and they reach into their coat pocket, you reach in yours. Odds are that they will take their hand out.

I was back at my favorite bar shooting pool. I was winning until a good-looking woman walked in. She came to the jukebox and asked, "Where do the quarters go in?"

"It takes dollars. Here, let me take care of it for you." I put a dollar in for her. Then I said to her, "If I had the money, I would take you out on the town, but I don't so I won't." I went back to my game and lost.

She was sitting at the bar with a beer. I had enough to buy a beer so I went to her and bought her one and had a glass of water for myself.

Here name was Bernice and she said, "A guy is supposed to pick me up. It's a blind date. Why don't you give me your phone number in case it doesn't work out?" I went home.

A half hour after I got home she called. "I had a drink with him and didn't like him so I had him take me home. I have some corned beef and cabbage if you are hungry."

My office was five blocks away and I lived in the upstairs above my office. I said, "I'll be there in a half an hour."

She asked, "Why so long?"

"I want to shave and clean up."

That was the wrong answer. She said, "If you aren't here in five minutes I will not open the door."

I was there in three minutes. She had a friend there as a chaperone. It was love at first site.

I saw her every day after that. Three days later we want to the office and the fire department was there. The front of the first floor, which was another business, burned. The front was going to be a resale shop and included the basement. There was a lot of junk in there. I had the back and upstairs. There was no damage to my part except smoke.

Bernice told me I could stay with her for three days until we could get rid of the smoke smell. Those three days ended up being six months. Her daughter Candy adopted me as her daddy. Before she was two she would say, "He is my daddy." The son Ray was sixteen and very troubled. Bernice was an alcoholic and crack addict. She took care of the rent, utilities, and food. I took care of her crack and our beer.

One night she and her sister took Candy out to get some more beer and crack. I was asleep and they took my car. When they came to an

intersection the light was green. The driver of the car coming from the other direction was being beat on by her boyfriend. She went into Bernice's lane and hit her car head on.

Someone was pounding on the door and yelling my name. It was Bernice's mother. She said, "Ray called and Bernice was in an accident. I will take you there."

We got there and the EMS technician was helping Bernice up. I ran towards her as they were putting her in the EMS truck. A cop tried to stop me and I stiff armed him and continued on. Her mother told him I was her man. They put Bernice, her sister, me holding Candy, and the driver of the other car in the EMS truck and took us to the hospital.

By the time we got to the hospital Bernice was out of it. Candy had a bump on the head. The sister had a broken nose and her lip was badly cut. The driver of the other car had a broken leg. The boyfriend was not hurt.

At the hospital, the rest of Bernice's family showed up. Since Bernice could not give consent and there was not one that could, I said I was Candy's father so they would treat her. Afterwards Social Services asked why her birth certificate had another father. I told them I lied so that she would be treated. That was all that was said about that.

In the emergency room I went back and forth between Bernice and Candy. Candy was okay.

Bernice spent two weeks in the hospital and the sister was treated and released. The girl driving was treated and released. The boyfriend got beat up by Bernice's brothers and son. They dropped him off at the emergency entrance where he was treated and admitted.

In Michigan, if you are in an accident with a minor child in the car and if there is any alcohol or drugs in your system, it is considered child abuse because you put that child in danger. This is even if the alcohol level is too low for a ticket.

If you are not charged with child abuse you will be investigated. If you have a reputation of drug and/or alcohol abuse you may lose your child.

When I was with Bernice in order to keep her out of danger while I was trying to help her get off of crack, I bought her drugs. If I got busted I would have gone to prison for selling drugs. If you possessed

drugs and did not use them, you were charged with sale. Under the law I was selling drugs for a place to live and sex.

I would have done hard time but I deserved it. If you can't do the time, don't do the crime.

If you are busted for possession (depending on the amount) in Detroit and you are a user, the odds are that you will be sent to a rehab on the first offense.

I have noticed that the kids selling drugs on the street and the dealers that have the drug houses and those toward the top of the drug chain make the money if they don't smoke away their profits. I knew a 16-year-old that made \$1,000 to \$3,000 a week. When his house was broken into and his stash, stereo, TV, and \$5,000 was stolen, he decided to quit. The odds are that the kids will die or end up in prison if they survive to become adults.

The ones that sold out of the houses usually blew their profits on what they used. I would see them on the street and they would borrow gas money from me.

A 14-year-old kicked his parents out of the house and sold drugs from it. After about three months he was killed. He was not in a gang. He was a sole proprietor.

Based on what I have seen over the past two years, the kids are less likely to get into selling now.

The gangs seem to be losing members and most kids are tired of the bloodshed. The drug violence here seems to be down.

The drugs are still there but the dealers seem to realize if the keep a low profile, the odds are that they will prosper. If they are smart they even work to make the area they are in safer.

In the beginning there were a lot of people coming over to do their crack. Candy was going around with a contact high. They used to supply Bernice with her crack for the use of the house. I started to get rid of them. Some of her white friends would come and want me to buy theirs because they were afraid of the hood. If they wanted four rocks they had to pay for five. (One was for my lady.)

The dealer would give me six for five—four small and two big. I would get home and give her friends the four little ones and get rid of them. My lady would have the two big ones. One big problem was that if I got busted it would be for sale. In most cases I was only buying for my lady, but as I said before, under the law I was selling it to her

for room, board, and sex. In this case I was selling to her so-called friends for her drugs.

One time I was leaving a crack house and I saw Narco coming down the street. I stayed until they were long gone and talked with the dealer. Bernice was not too happy when I got back.

Another time when I left I picked up what I thought was a tail. After a few turns they went another way.

One place was busted five minutes after I left; another one was firebombed just before I got there. I also just missed a drive-by shooting.

I came close to getting caught a few times and I was trying to get her to quit. She did not think she had a problem. If they do not think they have a problem, they will not quit. They have to decide to quit on their own. All you can do is try to give them a reason to quit. It has to be their decision to quit.

Bernice did not admit to herself that she had a problem. I told her that if she did not quit, I would go back to one fifty-one rum. She did not want that but she said she would not quit because she was not addicted. I bought a pint of one fifty-one. Before I got home I poured out half and filled it with water. I told her I was going to drink it all now and from now on I was going to drink one fifty-one with a malt liquor chaser.

I drank the pint and a 40-ounce malt liquor. She did not quit.

My next idea was to get her mad at me and have her beat on me. I figured if she realized how dangerous she is when using crack she may quit. I pissed her off and she gave me two black eyes and I had scratches all over me. She woke up in the morning, saw me, and screamed.

"What happened to you?" she asked.

I answered, "You kicked my ass."

She said, "I would not do that, what really happened?"

Ray said, "You beat him up for no reason, Ma."

She quit for two days.

One night Bernice took two forty ounces to Mandy's house. Ray's girlfriend left a pint of vodka. I found out that vodka cuts the foam when you pour beer. I mixed the pint with the beer and when it was gone I figured it was unfair for Bernice to have two forty ounces and her crack so I walked over to Mandy's, downed twenty ounces, and walked back.

I made it home, opened the door, and fell half outside and half inside of the house. Bernice came and tried to get me into the house. She asked Ray to help and he said, "He got himself into that position, he can get himself out of it." He then went back to sleep.

Bernice called Mandy and the two of them got me in.

The next day I decided not to drink anymore. That was over ten years ago and I have had two beers and two cold ducks since then. I chose to stop drinking and I no longer have the urge to drink. Since then I have tended bar twice and gone to bars often and only drank pop.

Ray adopted me too. He was 16 and still in the ninth grade. We would sit on the front porch a lot and try to figure out how we could get her to quit. He never knew his father and I was the first father figure he had.

He said, "Dad, I'm not a bad kid. I see my mother the way she is and I wonder why I should even try. I sell drugs. She has even bought drugs from me and then tells me not to sell them. I can make a thousand dollars a week easily selling."

"She can die tomorrow from the crack and you can get killed or end up in prison for selling," I said. "I am trying to get her to quit. I buy it for her to keep her safe from getting hurt or getting busted. I kicked out the other addicts except for family. The only thing left is to leave."

Vince was Bernice's brother. Vince thought he was God's gift to women but he is really God's gift to him. Vince and Bernice were together all the time when she did crack. He also smoked a lot of weed and loved his beer. To him beer was the most important thing in life. I never saw him without his beer.

He went to the party store, cashed his paycheck, and bought two forty-ounce magnums. When he got out of the store, a guy got in front of him and pulled a gun. The guy accidentally knocked the bag of magnums out of his hands.

Everyone gasped. They all knew Vince would go crazy. First he started to cry. The robber looked like he was puzzled. Vince knocked the gun out of his hand, jumped on him, and commenced to beat the shit out of him.

The cops came and started to pull Vince off the guy. The storeowners came out and told the cops that he was the victim.

The cops pulled back and said, "Let us know when you are done so we can take him to jail."

Vince was packing two nickel plated 45s but he just wanted to beat the shit out of the guy.

Whenever Bernice and I were apart and I would see Vince he would try to get us back together. The whole family felt I was the man for her. The problem was the drugs and Vince did not help.

I took Vince to a bar. The barmaid would spend a lot of time talking to us. He used his lines on her and told me that she was in love with him. The next time I went into the bar she asked about him. I told her I would bring him in. She said, "Oh no, I don't want to see him. He is stuck on himself."

Vince loved weed almost as much as beer. One night he, Bernice, and I were sitting in the kitchen. A couple of his buddies came in with this hairy weed. It had red hairs on it and it was potent stuff. At the time I was drinking and had an occasional joint. We passed one joint around and all five of use got stoned. I have never been that drunk. Even Vince said no to another joint.

I was in slow motion. I went to get Ray and seemed like it took hours but it was only fifteen minutes. I was coming to a traffic light and it looked like it was getting farther away instead of closer. I got home and went to bed. I never touched weed again.

Vince did not have a driver's license and drove cars with expired or no license plates. He drove on the side streets hoping to avoid the cops. He would get stopped and they would say they do not have time for the paperwork and let him go with a verbal warning. Soon they would just look the other way.

He moved out to the suburbs and within a month ended up in jail. The first time was six months and the second time was a year. The last time he had a stroke in jail. When he came out he stopped using crack but still uses weed and beer. (He likes his bud and Bud.)

Vince did not work. He would do odd jobs and sell junk. He has a wife and six kids. He doesn't spend much time at home. He is a player. His wife knows but doesn't worry about it.

He likes white women and I like black women. When I was not with his sister, every once in a while we would go out. I would take him to a topless bar and set him up with the white dancers and I would be with the black dancers. If business was slow we would have

a bunch of dancers at our table along with the waitresses and we would have a party.

Whenever Bernice would try to get off the drugs, Vince or her sister Doreen would get her back on.

Vince is the kind of guy that is hard not to like. He is a happy-golucky type of person. He will do anything for you as long as you pay him. He will borrow money from you and it may take a year to get it back, if you get it back, but if you borrow from him, he is there the next day. The thing is there is something about him that you cannot get mad at him.

No matter how much Vince pisses you off, when you see him you can't stay mad at him.

Dave is Bernice's other brother. Dave was in a Detroit R&B group and they had a recording offer. The night before the contract was to be signed Danny was busted for selling drugs. He went to prison for three years and his promising career became an unobtainable dream.

Dave was someone I could talk to about Bernice and my efforts to help her. He told me something I never realized before. He said I was as much of an addict as she was. I wasn't addicted to crack but I was addicted to her.

When Bernice and I would have a battle, Dave's house was one of my escapes. He never blamed anyone for his drug problem. He did say that Bernice got him started, but he also realized that he could have said no.

Doreen was a piece of work. She was tall and she was wild. She was a crack addict and an alcoholic. She had three beautiful daughters and a tall son and a granddaughter that was almost a victim of abortion.

When the daughter got pregnant Doreen decided she did not want to be a grandmother so she took her daughter to an abortion clinic. The doctor found out that the grandmother had custody and therefore the mother could not do anything. The abortion never happened, thank God.

Whenever Bernice tried to quit, Doreen and Vince were there to get her started again. The same thing would happen if one of the others tried to quit.

Doreen had a boyfriend that was an abusive piece of shit. She would show up with broken arms and legs. He threatened Bernice

and she told him flat out that if he tried anything she would kill him and I told him if she didn't I would. When the family had enough and she decided to leave, he was warned to stay away from her.

I ran in to him at the Chicago lounge and he was with two women. He told them I was his buddy. While he shot pool I told them about him. They left and he came back and asked what happened to the ladies. I told him that they realized he was an asshole and left.

Doreen's next man was a good man. He passed away after a couple of years. He was another victim of drugs.

One night she came at Ray with a broomstick and told him he had to be out in the morning. She then started a fight with me and told me to leave. I said goodbye and walked out.

The next day I went back to get my stuff and Ray was moving out. She asked me, "Why is he leaving?"

"You told him to move out," I answered.

"No I didn't," she insisted.

"Yes, you did, and you kicked me out too."

"Don't leave me, Lee," she pleaded.

"Sorry, kid. When you quit the crack, I may come back."

I was gone. The Whitney Houston song from *The Bodyguard* came on the radio and I cried. I still love her but we cannot be together.

If I ever marry again and if she will have me, Sharon is the one. We rarely argued and we always got along. When we first met we liked each other. She was a dancer and I started seeing the barmaid. After a little over a year and a half I had broken up with Brenda. I was at the bar and Sharon was dancing.

I bought her a juice (she rarely drank alcohol) and I had a Coke (I had quit drinking).

I said, "I had just left a woman and I am free. I would like to get together with you. Are you available?"

She said, "Lee, I was yours the day you met me before you started seeing Cassandra. I am still yours."

It was just before Christmas and I had already bought the Christmas presents for Bernice and her children. Now I was buying presents and a tree for Sharon and Nancy. It taught me one thing. Don't break up and start a new relationship just before Christmas.

In two weeks I was in love with Sharon. My problem was I was still in love with Bernice. I could not be with Sharon on Christmas and I

ended up and with Bernice's family. I ended up sleeping with Bernice for three days.

After the three days, Bernice and I broke up again and I was back with Sharon. She forgave me but did not let me forget it for a few months.

Nancy was eleven years old and a sweetheart. The first time I met her she gave me a big hug. As time went on we became closer. Today she calls me Daddy Two.

Nancy's father was a male dancer. He wasn't too happy when her mama started seeing an older, gray-haired, white man. He also wasn't happy that Nancy liked me so much.

I told her, "I want your daddy to always be number one in your heart. I want to be number two."

I picked Sharon up at work and we were going to my apartment. When we opened the front door to the building, two guys came up behind us. One of them had a sawed-off shotgun.

The gunman said, "Let's not make this a murder. Get in the hallway."

We went into the hallway. The gunman had the gun on Sharon. The other guy was watching me. All they wanted was the cash. He took Sharon's purse and got the money out of it. His partner looked at me like he knew me and took my money. When I was with Bernice I bought drugs from him in the projects. If he would have said anything there would be two bodies in the hallway.

As they left, the gunman said, "Have a good night." They took off into the night.

Sharon never came back to my apartment.

I was sitting in Coney Island around the corner from my Sharon's house. The high school kids were coming in after school. There were two guys sitting behind me that were about sixteen or seventeen.

Nancy, who was fourteen and looking like she was eighteen, came in.

One guy said, "I would like to get into Nancy's pants."

The other one said, "Me too, man, she is looking good."

I turned around and said, "You are talking about my daughter. She is only fourteen and if you or anyone wants to try anything with her, they have to answer to me. I will kick ass."

They both apologized. Nancy heard me too and she gave me a kiss and said, "I love you, Daddy Two."

I was taking Nancy to and from school. She was starting to have problems with the other kids kidding her about having a white father. One day when I picked her up she decked a boy in front of school. After a few kids got knocked down, the harassment stopped.

My wallet has been running on or near "E" for a long time. I could not afford car insurance. It was needed to get license plates. Having the need to drive, I forged 15-day temporary tags and did not register the cars. I called them throwaway cars.

I had a 1975 Olds Regency 98 that had a good body. The engine alone was worth \$500. I paid \$100 for the car. With a little over \$1,000 I could have it looking like new. It ran like new. I had my Sharon and Nancy's pictures on my dashboard.

I went through a yellow light, but it changed to red before I got out of the intersection. Suddenly I saw blue lights flashing behind me.

A black cop and a white cop got out of the car. The black cop stayed at the back of the car to back up his partner. The white cop came up and saw the pictures on the dashboard. He wasn't happy.

He said, "So you like little black girls?"

I answered politely, "That is my future wife and daughter, sir."

You could almost see the steam coming out of his ears.

The black cop noticed the fifteen-day tag and said, "Is this tag a Xerox, sir?"

I'm thinking that I am going to get a ticket and said, "Yes, sir, it is."

The white cop got all excited and exclaimed with the greatest of joy, "That's a felony! You are looking at two to four years in prison!"

He looked at my driver's license and asked if it had the right address on it. I told him I lived in the apartments around the corner. He said, "You can't live there."

The black cop tried not to laugh. I asked, "Why can't I live there, sir?"

"There aren't any white people there."

The partner was ready to roll over laughing, and I answered, "What makes you think I am white, sir?"

The partner couldn't hold it in anymore and started laughing. While he was frisking and cuffing me, the white cop ran my driver's license.

I have never seen anyone so happy when he shouted, "He has three fugitive warrants. Two for tickets and one for child support."

I was in deep shit.

The white cop drove my car and his partner and I were in the cop car. At the impound yard the white cop could not get out of the car. He started to get upset and yelled, "Get me out of here!"

His partner and I were now on first-name basis and he asked, "Lee, could you let me know how my partner can get out of your car?"

"No."

"Please?"

"How can you stand that bigot?"

"I can't, but he is my partner and I have to work with him."

"I'll set him free if you set me free."

"I can't because it was already called in, but I will tell the guards at the precinct to give you your cigarettes and a light when they go by you."

"Okay, but only for you. Tell the idiot to start the car, unlock the door, lower the window and open the door from outside." Actually, all he had to do was unlock it but I wanted to make them think it was difficult.

I went to the precinct lockup for 72 hours. The cell was six-by-six with a concrete bed with polyurethane painted on the top. The toilet was on one side of a post with the sink on the other. If you sit on the pot, don't be surprised if a female guard goes by. I always asked, "How ya doin', babe?"

We ate at the will of the guards. If they overheated the sandwiches we did not eat. If some fool complained that it was time to eat, the guard would tell him the constitution says nothing about when we eat so we would miss a meal. I had two bologna sandwiches in 72 hours.

When the guard came by and I wanted a cigarette he would give me one and light it. The other inmates yelled, "Who has the squares (cigarettes)?" Of course since it was not allowed, I would yell the same thing.

We were allowed one local phone call a day. Sharon did not have a phone so I tried to get a hold of the guy I shared the apartment with. I finally did and he let Sharon know. She tried to call about me but they said they had no record of me being there. Even when I got to the county jail they told her that they did not know where I was.

When I was taken to court, the guard gave me my lighter and eight cigarettes. There were eight of us in the van so I became a hero and gave them all a square and a light. I then got rid of the lighter.

It was a big room and about 30 of us were waiting to see the judge and find out where we were going to sleep that night.

One guy in a jogging suit was going around with his hands in his pants. Note that we all spent 72 hours in the precinct lockups with no showers. We had a sink but no soap or towels. We have been wearing the same clothes we had on when we got busted.

A guard came in and said someone had been smoking weed. There was no drug-sniffing dog, but there was a drug-sniffing guard.

We all stood in a row with our hands held out in front of us. The sniffing guard walked in with his fearless leader and started sniffing. The guy in the jogging suit was next to me. The guard sniffed his hands and almost passed out. After a minute to recover, he went down the rest of the row and caught two guys. They were reported to the judge and got high bail.

The guy next to me laughed and said to me, "I wasn't playing with myself. It was my joint."

The judge set my bail at a thousand dollars, ten percent. I needed a hundred dollars for my bail plus my tickets, which were two hundred fifty dollars, and my child support warrant was for nineteen hundred dollars. I figured I needed a two-week stay in jail. I was going to have a friend pay the hundred dollars. The city where I had the tickets would come for me and I would pay them and then the friend of the court would come. The friend of the court would let me go because I could not afford to pay and it was back support. Both kids were over eighteen.

I went to another bullpen in the jail. There was a young man in there that just got out of the hospital. He was a track star in high school. Here is his story.

"I was out running. A cop behind me told me to stop. I did not see or hear him. Suddenly I felt something hit me in the back of my head. The bullet tore through my jaw and tore out all of my teeth on the right side and came out on the side of my mouth. I ran around the corner not knowing who shot me and hid under a pick-up. The cop saw my blood coming from under the truck and said, 'Come out or die.'

"I was sent to the hospital and spent three weeks there with no visitors or phone calls. I just got out of the hospital and still have not had a phone call."

I told him, "Call a civil lawyer. This is a big lawsuit and he will get you the best criminal lawyer around."

Another guy said, "Was the cop black?"

I looked around and realized that I was the only white guy there. The young man looked at me, smiled then said, "He was black." I think he was white but the young man was saving me from having a problem.

I don't know what happened to him. I hope he got big bucks. He just turned eighteen a couple of days before he was shot. He was charged with armed robbery. They had no gun or other evidence. To some of the storekeepers, all of the black kids look alike so his eyewitness testimony would be suspect.

I was then sent to a sergeant, who placed me in a cell. The new section of the jail had nice two-man cells with a lounge area and color TV. The old section had ten-man cells with bars on two sides. The TV was a small black and white outside of the cell. There was a long table. The toilet was in the open with a sink on the back of it. There was a stall shower next to it.

I was talking to the sergeant. He was looking at me sort of strange, so I said, "What's up?"

He said, "You look Caucasian and it says here that you are Caucasian. You ain't white."

I told him, "Put your mind at ease and put me in a cell with all blacks. I do get along with white people, especially poor white trash."

I went to another lockup to get my jail uniform and slippers.

I met another young black man that was in a car with two older white guys. They got stopped and there was crack in the back seat between the two of them. I asked, "Do you and the other guys use crack?"

He said, "I don't, but they do."

I asked, "What about bail?"

"My father is not going to bail me out," he answered.

I told him, "The others will make bail and get together with their story. The driver will get off and they will say it is yours. If you don't do drugs, you will be charged with sale. If the other guy admits that they were his, he would go to rehab."

There was another guy listening and he got into the conversation. "I am going to prison for selling drugs. I have been there before. You are young and cute. You have no chance in prison unless you find a big friend to help you. You may have to be his bitch. Listen to the old white man, he has a lot of street sense for an old white man. You have to fight this. Try to convince the other guy to admit they were his. It may save his life because he would go to rehab."

I got a ten-man cell with all blacks. I was called, "Old Man." I got seconds and, if I wanted, thirds on all meals. I played cards and made friends. I enjoyed it. If I could stay for a couple of weeks I could quit smoking.

There were two guys that were eighteen and they were the best cartoonists I have ever seen. They drew ghetto comics and if they had the right people helping them they could get in the funny section of the papers. Another guy was a playwright. I wanted to get him with my friend who was a playwright.

The main thing I found out was that the inmates were almost all there because they were poor. The crimes were petty or committed to get food for the family or drugs. The playwright gave me his story.

"I was in a parking lot with my razor blade. I would go behind the cars and carefully take the year tabs off the plates. I would sell them." His crime report showed he was busted with six tabs, a razor blade, and a tube of super glue.

Another inmate said, "Man, I was walking and saw a door open. I went in and saw a nice TV, unplugged it, and headed for the door. An old lady started running toward me and I ran with the TV. I tripped on the way out and the TV went flying. Before I knew it the cops were all over me and I was on my way to jail."

After a few days the white guards did not like it so they moved me. I said, "Hey, man, I ain't white. Leave me with the brothers." The brothers all said, "He's a brother, don't take him away." I didn't have time to find out how to contact the cartoonists or playwright.

They moved me to a cell that was half white and half black. The black guys accepted me as a brother and the white guys were raised in the hood.

One guy was a few years younger than me. He was busted for drunk driving for the fourth time and charged with felony drunk driving. He said, "I am on disability and have no family. If I get probation it will cost me. I want prison."

You ever try to smoke toilet paper? Don't.

I called my best client and he said he was going to bail me out. I said I needed to take another week to rest and quit smoking. He had some work for me to do and was in a hurry so he bailed me out. I had to pay him back and that caused me to lose my apartment.

The income from him was almost half of my income and it took seven months to pay him back. The friend of the court told me a week later that I still owed forty-eight hundred dollars but did not have to pay then because I didn't have the money. Told me to come back in six months to see if I can afford to start making payments. He also said that I would not have had to pay the warrant. He would have let me go when he saw me and said the same thing about that too.

Living in the hood and being a gray-haired white guy, there is one main rule. Never show fear. I have been close to death a few times and I do not fear death. My legs are in pain when I walk and at times when I am sitting or lying down, so I am not afraid of pain. It also helps that I am a big man. I am six feet, one inch tall and weigh around two hundred seventy-five.

Another thing is always look like the kind of person others do not want to mess with. I do not put up with BS and I do not back down. My street name is the Crazy Old White Man. There were many times giving the impression that I am a crazy old man saved my butt.

I was walking down the street and four teenagers came up to me.

The first one asked, "Where are you going, old man?"

"None of your damn business," I answered.

The second asked, "Are you a cop?"

I laughed and answered, "No."

The third got to the point. "Give us all of your money."

My answer explains my street name. "If all four of you don't get out of my face right now, I am going to kick your young asses."

The fourth exclaimed, "Let's get the hell out of here!"

The four took off.

A girl was walking down the street. A kid came from behind, grabbed her chain, and ran. He was running by me and I tripped him. He dropped the chain and I picked it up and gave it back to her.

After I got out I was talking to a client. He told me about the death of a guy that used to work for him. We both liked the guy and I thought about him.

Jim was an ex-con. Thanks to a work opportunity credit, my client hired him. This tax credit is an incentive to employers to hire people who are in a position where it is difficult to find work and people who are receiving aid, certain ex-felons, and veterans are included.

Jim became the second in command at the company. He traveled to Southeast Asia for the company to help set up the machines that were sold. He became the sales manager and plant manager.

Things were going good for Jim. He had a company car, a good salary, and got a discount on the rent for a house on the property of the company. Best of all he was staying clean and sober.

Before he came to work he was in Jackson Prison for armed robbery.

His boss saw the potential in Jim and the help from the government made it hard to pass up giving the man a chance.

Jim fell in love with the secretary. They were caught having sex in his office during working hours. The secretary started to slack off on her work, thinking he would protect her job. Then she started getting an attitude with the people that called in.

The boss told Jim that she had to go. Jim said that he would go if she got fired. She got fired and he quit.

The company was north of Detroit. The secretary dropped him and he had to move out of the house and went back to Detroit.

Back in Detroit he got involved with his old buddies. He went back to using drugs. He did some selling to pay for his habit. He was fast on the fast track back to prison.

This story has two endings, the police version and the street version. As you may suspect I am more inclined to believe the street version.

The police version: He broke into a house. He was armed and the homeowner came in with his shotgun, saw the weapon, and shot him.

The street version: A man owed him a sizable sum of money. The man finally said he had the money and told him to come to his house to get it. The man told him to come in the back door. When he got there he came to the back door. The man told him to come in and shot him, planted a gun on him, and broke the door with Jim's tire iron. He wiped the tire iron and put Jim's prints on it.

The police story may sound more believable, but I would bet on the street story. We will never know. Jim was DOA. There were no

witnesses. It was either a perfect murder or self-defense.

After telling me the story, he said he had the rest of the money he owed me from my last bill. I told him I would get up there and pick it up.

After I had my run-in with the long arm of the law, I could not drive. Sharon took me fifty miles north of the city to pick up the money. Nancy rode with us. We were about ten miles from the client and we were pulled over by a county sheriff's deputy. There was no reason for the pullover, but north of the city the police pulled over mixed couples and blacks for no reason.

The cop came to the car and said, "Your right rear tire is low on air."

He let me get out of the car and look at it. It wasn't really low enough to worry about, so I said, "When we get up to my client's, we will put air in it."

He asked us for our licenses. I told him mine was suspended. He called her license in and found that she had a warrant for an old ticket that she had forgotten about. She said she never got anything in the mail about it.

He said, "Do you trust this man alone with your daughter?"

Sharon messed up and said, "Of course I do. He is going to be her stepfather." (Oops.)

He handcuffed her and took her to his car. He told me that his partner was coming to take Nancy and me to my client's office. The car was impounded. Nancy was crying and when the partner came I convinced her to have they guy let her say good-bye to her mother.

When we got in the car I said, "Don't worry, Nancy, we will get your mother out in a couple of hours."

The partner and I talked about the bust and she agreed that her partner was wrong.

Luckily the client owed me more than enough money for bail. He had an employee take us to cash the check and to the jail. I have never seen anyone as happy as Sharon and Nancy were when she came out. We took a cab to Coney Island next to where we could get a bus back home.

At Coney Island Sharon said, "This guy took me by his dream house on the way to the jail. He flirted with me all the way."

I looked at Nancy and I said, "Honey, you know that I love you as if you were my own daughter and I love your mother. I know that you have been having trouble in school because of our relationship. I cannot promise you that this won't happen again. The police will stop us just because of our color. Hopefully we will have the tickets taken care of so one of us won't end up in jail.

"At any time if our relationship is too hard on you I will get out of your life."

Nancy looked at me and smiled. Then she took my hand and said, "I think I'll keep you."

Yes, her license was suspended, but the stop was racial profiling. Even if the tire was low the police do not run a check on the license. They offer to give you a ride to a phone or to send a towing service. Even the prosecutor agreed with me when we went up to court for the ticket of driving without a valid driver's license. He changed it to driving without having the license with her.

The original ticket that the warrant was for was dismissed before we went to court on the county ticket. I think the county ticket should have been dismissed because it was an illegal stop.

Here is a word to the wise. The license plate frames you get from the car dealers usually cover the wording at the top or bottom of the license plate. That is illegal but only used as an excuse to stop a motorist. That is why dealers are not stopped from giving them away.

# CHAPTER 6

# A Reformed Drunk Living in a Bar

I could not afford my share of the rent because I was paying back the bail money from my run-in with the law. A client had a bar and I talked him into letting me live there and work out of the bar. He agreed and I did his monthly accounting for free and moved my computer and myself into the bar.

I also became the bouncer. I was probably the oldest bouncer around (forty-nine), but I was sober and I knew how to talk to people.

It was a redneck bar in a mostly black neighborhood in a strip of motels. I lived in the motel next to the bar. This was a section of a main drag that had some hookers, drug addicts, and drug dealers. As with anywhere I lived, I got to know the street people first off.

Sharon and I did not see much of each other because I wasn't driving and it was out of the city. After a while the owner of the bar said he needed a barmaid.

I said, "Why not give Sharon a try?"

He said, "The customers are mostly bigots. They won't want her in here tending bar."

I told him, "You are a borderline bigot and you like to look at black women. You know you like Sharon. She has the kind of personality and looks that make a man want her. Most white men fantasize about black women and most black men fantasize about white women. I

know that white women like Sharon too. If you bring her in here, I'm willing to bet you that she will make more in tips than any of your barmaids ever made and you will make more too."

On her first night the day barmaid worked with her and they shared tips. The day barmaid made three times as much as she ever did. The bar made twice as much as it ever did.

The word at the redneck bars was that there was a cute little black bitch tending bar at the Nite Lite. That brought in more customers. As long as she worked there, the bar made more money than before. It did not make as much as the first night but it improved greatly. Every day I had someone saying they were going to steal her away from me. They all failed.

I met the young guy who said he was a golden gloves champ. The problem was that almost every word that came out of his mouth was a lie. One day he borrowed twenty dollars from me. I never saw it again.

He helped a friend of mine and then a friend of his. He stole some tools from the friend's friend. He also owed my friend money.

Then he had the nerve to badmouth me to my lady and he tried to get her for himself. What really made me mad was that when he tried to borrow more money, I turned him down. He went to my lady and she said no. I heard about it and I told him off.

Later that night he told me he was a narc. I tried not to laugh in his face. A narc would never tell me he was a narc. Everyone knew I knew the dealers.

The next morning I was talking to the friend he owed. We decided that we were fed up with him so we decided to drop a dime on him. We went into the restaurant where we always had breakfast. The clientele was varied from businessmen to hookers. The dealers also ate there.

We spread the word that our "friend" said he was a narc. A dealer told him he better leave town and not come back. Never did see him again.

After a month Sharon got sick and had to quit.

After a while he needed a bartender and I was able to get a motel room with what I made as a bartender.

When I tended bar, the clientele became mixed. My customers were workers from local businesses, regulars, hookers, and drug

dealers. I told the hookers up front that I did not allow them to solicit my customers. If the customers bought them drinks and took them out, that was fine. I told the drug dealers not to bring in or sell their drugs. They could come in for a drink and my fantastic half-pound burgers, but they had to have their IDs.

My boss, Bill, was an alcoholic and my biggest problem. I would cut a customer off and he would try to buy them a drink. He would sit and stare at some of the customers. He would give me a hard time when I would pour a heavy shot.

One night it was close to closing time. This big customer came in. He was about six feet six inches tall and weighed three hundred fifty pounds. All the customers left except for the boss's good buddy Red Neck.

The big guy was almost in tears. "My wife is dying of cancer. The doctors say she has a few days left. She is all doped up and still in pain."

I said, "I understand how you feel. She is in pain and soon she will no longer feel the pain. She will be in a better place where she can watch over you. She will still be with you in your heart. When you are hurting, she will be with you. Think of the good times and how she would want you to be happy."

He was starting to come out of his depression when Bill, who was about five feet six inches tall and less than half his weight, asked him if he wanted to arm wrestle.

The customer looked at him like he was nuts and said no. I went to Bill and told him to leave the guy alone. Then Bill started to bother the guy about it. The customer got up and Red grabbed the gun from under the bar.

I said, "Red, put that damn thing back and, Bill, you shut your mouth."

The customer said, "Okay, I will arm wrestle."

They went to the end of the bar and brought out the telephone books. Even with two telephone books, they were not close. Bill was trying to get set and he was hurting the customer's arm.

He was getting pissed to say the least.

Red pulled the gun again. I grabbed the gun and said, "Red, sit your dumb ass down and stay out of this. Bill, stop making an ass out of yourself."

The customer said, "Thanks for your help. Even with the hassle with the two idiots I feel better now."

He left and I had to get rid of Bill and Red so I could close up.

The customers would ask me about the hookers. I would tell them just to remember the main rule of "dating." Do not go to sleep. The next day they would come back and say, "She stole three hundred dollars from me. Can you get it back?"

I would ask, "Did you go to sleep?"

The answer was always the same. "Yes, and when I woke up she was gone with my money."

I said, "I told you 'Do not go to sleep.' What do you do? You go to sleep. She is doing her job."

One night one of the local girls made it big. The john had a briefcase with one hundred fifty thousand dollars in it. The fool went to sleep. Luckily he did not meet her in the bar.

There were two brothers on the street. They sold some drugs and were wannabe pimps. The one brother had one hooker working for him. He was approached by a couple of guys in suits. They told him to find the girl that got the money. They told him if he did not turn her and the money over to them in a week, he would get a broken arm and be given another week. He left town.

I was tending bar and Samantha walked in. She was one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen. We looked at each other and there was an attraction that neither of us could understand. As we talked we found out that we had both just lost our fathers. Her father was born the same date and time that I was.

Her father was a drug dealer down south and she was involved in the business with him. Before he passed away he sent her up to this area. Mr. Big bought his drugs from her father. He was taking care of her welfare and rented a room for her and the kids. He was busted after her father died and she was out of a place to stay.

I lived in a motel next door. For some reason I felt that she could be trusted. She had two beautiful children. I gave her the key to the motel room and told her she could stay with me until she could get a place.

At first we were torn between the father and daughter love and the lover love. She told me that if I was ten years younger and black she would marry me in a minute. I told her I did not want to be ten years

younger, and as for the black part, turn off the lights and piss me off and she will think I am black. When I get angry, the street talk comes out.

She became my daughter. She called me daddy and the kids called me granddaddy. I only had one bed, so she and I slept on the top two thirds and the kids on the bottom third. She stayed a couple of weeks and got a room of her own.

One of the hookers, Helen, was in the streets with her daughter Elaine. Elaine would be in the motel when her mother was doing tricks. When Samantha was with me she would visit us. When I was tending bar, Elaine would babysit for Samantha's children when she would go out or come to the bar.

As with most of the hookers, Helen had a problem with crack. This guy I met in Coney Island next door fell for Helen. He said, "Lee, I want to let Helen and Elaine move in with me. I can take care of them and Helen will be able to stop what she is doing."

I said, "Jack, deep inside Helen is a good person but she is a crack addict and Elaine is always asking for money. You are asking for trouble."

He did not listen to me and he took them in. Helen tried, but after a few days Jack came into the bar. He ordered a seven and coke. He never came in the bar before and I wondered why now.

He gave me an answer. "Lee, this is the first drink I have had in seventeen years. I woke up this morning and Helen and Elaine were gone with their things and my gun collection worth over five thousand dollars."

I am a reformed drunk (not a recovering alcoholic) and I hated to serve a recovering alcoholic his first drink after a long recovery. He was in every night after that for a month.

Elaine's seventeenth birthday was coming and Samantha thought we should give her a party. The boss said we could use the bar as long as it was over by three in the afternoon. Samantha decorated the bar and we picked up some presents and had her friends there. Her mother got the ice cream and cake and the bar supplied the pop.

Helen said, "Look at her. She has never had so much fun. I am going to quit using drugs and straighten myself out."

Helen got a job that lasted a week, then Elaine wanted things that Helen could not afford and she went back to the streets.

Elaine was visiting Samantha and the kids. I was tending bar. Helen was in the next room with a truck driver. He had ninety between the mattress and box spring. After Helen left it was gone and he called the police. Samantha and I were thrown out because Elaine was with us and they figured we were in on it.

We went to a friend's for a month, then I moved downtown and Samantha became a live-in house cleaner for an older man.

One night the boss was talking to a black man outside the back door of the bar. This customer thought the boss was having a problem (he wasn't) and started to go out there to kick some ass.

Now this clown was about six feet two inches tall, three hundred pounds, and thirty years old. I was six feet one inches tall, two hundred fifty pounds and almost fifty years old. I got in front of him and told him to sit back down. He kept coming. I threw him up against the wall and told him if he did not sit back down I was going to kick his ass.

The next day he was sober and asked me if I threw him against the wall. I told him, "You own a bar and you should know that the biggest problem when there is trouble is when a drunken ass customer gets involved. If you do it again I will kick your ass."

He said, "I used to break bones for a living."

I said, "I still do."

We never had trouble with him again.

The day bartender, her daughter, and her daughter's boyfriend were in the bar. The daughter and her boyfriend were arguing and it was getting close to blows. The mother said she would talk to the daughter and asked me to talk to the boyfriend. We went over, and as I was ready to approach him a customer grabbed his arm. He thought it was me and swung at me and connected with my jaw. Realizing he made a mistake, he apologized. I understood and accepted his apology but I was hurting for three weeks.

From that point on when I knew there was going to be a problem I went to the customers I thought might get involved and said, "I am going to have to cut a customer off. He will argue with me and it will look like a fight is starting. Just sit down and do not get involved unless I ask for your help. I would hate to have to kick your ass for trying to help."

The customer comes in two or three nights a week and buys drinks for the house and at times brings in people off the street and buys them drinks. He would spend over a hundred dollars each time and would tip me at least twenty dollars. Each time I would have to cut him off.

"Jim, I have to cut you off. If you want I can give you some coffee and you can sit a while before you go. I know you aren't driving but it is too dangerous out there if I let you drink anymore."

He would start yelling. I would come out from behind the bar and talk to him. I would walk with him to the door and he would yell at me all the way. We would get to the door and he would thank me and go.

The other customers would cheer and clap their hands and each gave me another tip.

A good bartender has to be able to talk to the customers. When they are down he has to help them up. He has to be their friend and shrink. He has to be able to talk his way out of a fight. Above all he has to stay sober.

One morning I was in a restaurant for breakfast. I was sitting at the counter next to Santa Claus.

It was close to Thanksgiving when people were starting to think about Christmas. Santa was smoking a cigarette. He saw a kid come in with his mother. He moved the ashtray in front of me and said, "Santa doesn't smoke, so this is your cigarette."

The kid came right up to him and said, "Santa, what are you doing here?"

He said, "I am going around checking my list to see if you are being a good boy. What would you like for Christmas, young man?"

The kid happily told him and his mama looked happy that she did not have to wait in the Santa line at the mall.

For the next week Santa and I had breakfast together and he told me his story. I hope I can find him when the time comes to start the rehab center. He said he knew people that could help and he too would help me.

Once a lady came up to Santa and said, "Santa, you are my last hope. I live in Birmingham, Alabama. My son who is fourteen ran away from home. I am sure that he came to Detroit. Please, help me, Santa."

With information she supplied, he did some checking and he found her son. He talked to him and convinced him to go home. He took him to the motel to see his mother and talked to them both about their problems.

He told me that he got a letter from her a few months later and that the son was doing well in school and they were very happy. I looked in his eyes and I could see he was happy that we were there to help.

Before he became Santa, he had a massive heart attack. While in the hospital the doctors and nurses commented on how he looked like Santa Claus. He was going to have surgery and the odds for recovery were about fifty/fifty. He prayed and told God that if the operation was a success, he would take vacation time from Thanksgiving to Christmas and play Santa Claus.

Every year he would rent a red Lincoln with a white interior and go to the schools as Santa. He also went to rehab centers and hospitals. During the rest of the year he was available for schools too.

It was surprising how many kids would come up to him.

I was the only male bartender. I worked two nights during the week, Friday and Saturday nights, and a double on Sunday.

The clientele changed slightly when I worked the bar. The local hookers would come in and so would some of the drug dealers and other people from the neighborhood. The law was that the hookers did not solicit and the drug dealers did not carry and sell drugs into the bar. When I worked on the weekend the cops would send the drug-sniffing dog in to check the bathrooms and vice would watch the bar.

The boss wasn't happy, but he made more money and the dealers would make sure the customers were safe on the street outside the bar. The dealers knew that street robberies would hurt their business. If they saw a robbery in progress they would step in and stop it. I had two customers tell me how they were saved by dealers.

One night a guy came in the front door and went into the bathroom. Another guy came in the side door and went into the bathroom. In five minutes they came out and left the way they came in.

The boss was there so I told him to watch the bar and I followed the guy out the front. He went to the back and got in a car with the other guy. I went to a dealer and told him that it looked like they were going to stick up the bar.

I went back to the bar and placed two guns at convenient places behind the bar. The boss asked what was happening. I told him that we might get robbed. The dealer came in and said he found the guys and convinced them that it would not be healthy to mess with me.

He and the boss shot a game of pool. He had a black cane with a gold handle. The boss said, "That's a nice cane, can I see it?" He was looking it over, turned the handle and lo and behold there was a sword. (I have one of those for nighttime in the hood along with a five-inch butterfly knife.)

They both looked at me and I smiled. "I need one of those," I said as the boss was standing there with his mouth open. (That was the boss's "I'm drunk on my ass and don't know what to do" look.)

When the boss recovered, he asked me, "Should I make him leave and not bring it in anymore?"

"This man just saved your bar from getting robbed. He possibly saved our lives. You do not want to piss him off. Shoot the rest of the game and I will ask him not to bring in the cane again. For now I will hold it for him."

The guy shook his head and smiled as he gave me the cane. He played a few more games with the other customers, I gave him his cane, thanked him, and he left.

The boss was sleeping with this younger girl. She was eighteen and he was fifty-eight. Those behind the bar were told that she was twenty-one and to serve her. His wife knew he was seeing someone. She came into the bar and a hooker was talking to him. She thought the hooker was the one and jumped her. I tried to get in between the two and Red (drunk as a skunk) tried to pull the hooker off.

The girlfriend and the boss were watching. The girlfriend had a shit-eating grin on her face and the boss had a blank (what in the hell do I do now?) stare on his face.

Finally I got them apart and the buddy out of the way. She accused the hooker of sleeping with her husband. The hooker laughed and said she wasn't. I told the wife that I knew her and I knew she was not sleeping with her husband.

The sad part about it is that whenever she was in the bar, the girlfriend was there talking to him and the wife and the girlfriend were friendly. The girlfriend never got caught because she was so obvious. The wife looked ten times as good as the mistress.

A lady came in the bar. She was very upset. She said, "My husband and I had an argument. He was drunk and had a fifth of whiskey before the argument. I got out of there and I think he will come here. Don't serve him he probably had more after I left."

Lo and behold, hubby came in drunk. I watched him as he went down to the end of the bar where his wife was and started to argue. He asked for a whiskey. I said, "I am sorry, but I cannot serve you because you have had too much. If you sit at the other end of the bar and I will give you some coffee."

The boss came in (this is always the low point of my evening). After saying hello to the husband, he went to talk to the wife. The husband was drunk and irrational. He said to me, "Is he messing with my old lady?"

I know that he is hoping that he can get her to go out with him but she doesn't want to trade one drunk for the other. The husband was getting worried and went to the other end of the bar. Thinking he may be in trouble, he said, "Can I buy you a drink and let you two talk over your problem?"

I looked at her and she looked at me. We were both thinking there was going to be trouble. The boss gave them both a drink and I went to him and asked him to come to the other end of the bar for a minute.

I looked at him and said, "From now on could you please stay away from behind the bar when I am working? Especially *do not serve drinks*. He and his wife were arguing at home. He was drunk and she came here. He came in the bar drunker than you, and I would not serve him. I convinced him to drink coffee and sober up. You come in and flirt with her and he starts steaming so you offer him a drink. This bar is a corporation. It is a corporation to protect you if an employee serves someone that is drunk. If the drunk kills someone, you may lose the bar but not everything else you own. You served a man I cut off. If he goes out and gets himself killed, it will be considered your fault. The wife saw that I would not serve him. She saw you serve him. She can own your houses and your bar. Please get your butt out of the bar and do not come back tonight unless you want to be the bartender."

He asked, "Will you get me a beer?"

I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. I said, "I am the bartender and you are the owner. I have the power to cut you off and to kick

your ass out of the bar. You can fire me but not until after my shift. All I have to do is call the cops and tell them you will not leave and they can take you to jail if you do not get a ride home."

He left and I talked to the unhappy couple. He sobered up a little and they went home.

A lady came in and sat next to a guy at the bar. They kissed and I think they had a hand in each other's lap. After about a half an hour a lady came in on a mission. It was her husband. Before I knew it she smacked him on the head, called him every name in the book, and started on the other woman.

The other woman said, "I didn't know he was married. He is not wearing a wedding band."

The wife grabbed his hand and noticed that he had another ring on in place of the wedding band. (The guy wasn't stupid enough to not realize that you can always tell that there was a ring there.)

The wife said, "Get your ass home and pack your things. Do not be there when I get home."

"Where are you going?" he asked.

She said, "Let me see your wallet." He gave it to her and she took the money and threw it back at him. She continued, "Your girlfriend and I are going out on your money. Hopefully we will get laid."

She gave me a five and left with the other woman.

The husband said, "That's my money."

I looked at him and said, "No, it's mine. She gave it to me. I will buy you a beer."

"Thanks. I guess I screwed up," he said with a hurt puppy look on his face.

I asked, "Is this the first time?"

"No. The third," he said.

"I think it is time for you to go like she said," I told him.

Never saw any of them again. I really don't want to.

When you tend bar, you sometimes feel like a cross between a shrink and a preacher. Maybe someday they will let bartenders perform wedding ceremonies.

I talked to the customers. When they were down I could usually help them up. I had some regulars that tipped me very well. A woman, her father, and his ex-girlfriend would come in. The daughter would give me twenty dollars, she would make her father

tip me ten dollars, and the ex-girlfriend would give me twenty dollars.

A gay guy used to come in. He knew that I was straight. He also knew he could talk to me and I would not judge him. He also had AIDS.

He would tip five to ten dollars. One time he gave me fifty dollars in food stamps.

We had a Halloween party. The gay customer came with long blond hair and a beautiful red dress. When a guy would hit on him he told them up front that he was not a woman and they were thankful that he was honest.

The best costume was Jason from *Friday the Thirteenth*. He was about six feet, four inches tall. He just stood in a corner holding a machete and stared at everyone. You would look at him and shiver. No one could figure out who he was. I had talked to his wife half the night and she said he was visiting family for the week. If you looked into his eyes you could see deep dark pools. No movement. When you were looking he would not even blink.

He was by the door that most people came in and as soon as they saw him you could see the look of fear in their eyes.

I was helping tend bar but I was mainly a bouncer. The boss was in his usual happy mood. He asked who Jason was and I told him I didn't know. He asked if the machete was real and I said yes but he covered it with aluminum foil to make it look like it wasn't real. He told me to get the machete and I told him if he was worried he could ask the guy for it.

The guy kept his machete and did not kill anyone. He won the first prize and everyone was surprised who he was. He was probably the gentlest man I have ever known. He and his wife were a beautiful pair and they pulled it off so well.

Chris was a regular. Chris was a big man and, when sober, a nice guy. When he got drunk you were not sure what to expect. He was a good tipper and buys drinks for people. One night he came in with two guys he picked up on the street.

Both were crack addicts. Joe was about twenty-two. He would come to me a lot to talk about going to rehab. The next day he was going. (He did go in and as far as I know he kicked the habit.) Willy was an older addict and there was little hope for him.

Chris gave them each ten dollars and bought them drinks. Joe kept his and only had drinks that Chris bought for him. Willy spent most of his because he could not wait for Chris to buy for him.

Chris would play the oldies on the jukebox and walk around the bar. When I figured he had an hour to go I went to the other customers and said, "I am going to have to cut Chris off soon. When I do it will look like I am going to have a big problem. I can handle him and I want you to sit back, relax, and enjoy the fun.

Chris surprised me; he ran out of money before I cut him off. He ordered drinks for him and his buddies. I passed out the drinks and he went into his wallet and it was empty.

He said, "I'm out of money, can you put them on a tab for me?"

I said, "Sorry, Chris, I can't. If they don't get paid for, they come out of my pocket. I go without food and I can't do that."

I looked at Joe and Willy and said, "Willy, it seems like you spent your money. Joe, I know you still have yours. I think it is up to you to pay the eight dollars."

Before he could say anything, Chris said, "He doesn't have to pay my debt."

I said, "Chris, all three of you were drinking so all three of you owe the tab. I don't care who pays as long as one of you pays. Joe is the one with the money so Joe is the one who has to pay."

Joe said, "Lee's right, Chris, I will pay it."

Joe paid and they went out the back door. I heard a thud and went to the back door. Chris was out cold. His buddies picked him up and carried him home.

The next day Joe went to rehab. I never saw him again, which means he probably made it.

The next night Chris was in the bar alone. He said two big black guys robbed him. I told him that he blew his money in the bar and passed out. The two black guys carried him home.

Whenever I had a problem customer, I talked him or her out of the bar. If it was real hairy, I got a standing ovation and good tips.

As the title suggests, this was a redneck bar. I am a reverse Oreo. The two do not normally mix, but the customers liked me and they tried to hold their bigotry when I worked. When I worked there was a mixed clientele. The boss was a redneck too.

A mixed couple came in (a white man and a black woman); they were at least forty and the boss told me to card them. I looked at him

like he was crazy. The customers looked at him like he was crazy. He was crazy.

The lady asked as she pulled out her driver's license, "Why is he carding us?"

I answered, "Do you want the truth or BS?"
"Truth."
"He's a bigot."
"Okay."

The female customers liked me because they knew I dated black women. They could talk to me, knowing that I was not going to try to make time with them. They could come to me with their problems that they could not talk to another man about but a man would have the best answer. They knew I would be honest with them.

One customer met his wife and married her in the bar. There would be nights that the three of us would be the only ones left. On one of those nights he said, "If you miss that shot, you have to take you top off for the next game. She missed and she took off her top. Hubby knew he did not have to worry about me. (I am human and she did look good.)

He went out of town for a month and asked me to spend time with her so she didn't get lonely. I did and nothing happened. We were all friends and nothing would happen. I could not do that with another man's wife, especially when he was good to her. He was an ex-con. Killed someone in a fight. I would not want to piss him off.

One night Jack was in. He was having a few and another customer's son, Jim Roy, said to his father, Ray Rob, and Uncle Jay Job that Jack sold him his first drugs when he was eighteen.

Ray Rob said, "That guy got my son started on drugs five years ago when he was eighteen. It cost the family a fortune in rehab bills to get him clean. We are not doing anything here, but when he leaves we are going to beat the shit out of him."

I said, "I am not defending drug dealing. Jack has been out of the business since then. He recently got out of prison, so he has already paid for it. Your son was old enough to say no to his buddies. It was his decision to buy and use the drugs. He has no one to blame but himself. Did you talk to him about drugs or did you have the 'my kid can do no wrong' attitude like you do now."

"Are you blaming me?" he said.

"Not necessarily, I am saying that if anyone is to be blamed it is your son and you. If Jack wasn't around he would have gone to someone else."

Jay Job said, "If you call the police, we will kick your ass."

I ignored him and went to Jack. I explained the situation and he said, "I will go and take my chances."

"No, stay here and I will stick with you. If a cop comes in he will talk to me. I will let him know the problem and you can leave with the cop. In half an hour Elaine will be in to take over and I will have her call the police from the office. I will stay until they come."

"Aren't you worried about what they will do to you?" Jack asked.

"Hey, man, I am going with you. Tomorrow they will have forgotten about it."

They did.

When I was tending bar I would cut people off before they caused a problem. There were times that things got pretty hairy. I had to keep my cool and let everyone (including the boss) that I was in charge.

Once I made a decision, I could not back down.

On some Saturday nights, police would set up a decoy operation. The catch car would be parked in the bar lot to penalize me. They pulled over drunk drivers and got them to plead guilty to solicitation so they would not lose their driver's licenses nor have higher insurance rates. The figures looked great for the decoy operation. I am willing to bet that ninety percent of the busts were drunk drivers.

# CHAPTER 7

# **Powntown**

I moved downtown and I saw Sharon more. I thought her crack problem was over with. I left her before because of her addiction and she said she stopped.

I was a couple of blocks away from the Cass Corridor, which was one of the roughest, and most drug addicted, areas of the city. It was full of addicts, alcoholics, hookers, and the homeless. You could walk by a thick bushy area at night and see the light of lighters and crack pipes in the bushes. This also applied to many of the abandoned buildings.

Sharon's twin brother came to see me, and he said Sharon came to get some drugs and the dealer was holding her for more money. We walked to the corridor and went to some drug houses. I stayed outside while she went in. They would not be too happy if I went in with him.

We walked the streets asking addicts if they had seen her. Some said yes and told us where. He told me to go back to my place and he would be back soon.

He came and told me he needed fifty to get her. All I had was twenty and a wedding ring. He took it and said he would get her back to me. I didn't hear from him.

The next day she called me and I asked her about it and he set me up. He had planned this thing and had his addict buddies in on it. I am

sure they all had enjoyed the drugs he got with the money and the ring. It shows you how far an addict will go to get more drugs. It also shows how good they can act.

When he first came to me I didn't believe him. But as we went through the hood, I started to believe him. I could not take the chance and not do anything in case he was for once in his life telling the truth.

There was a preacher living in the next apartment. He and I talked about my castle of hope project. He was putting together a benefit concert with some of the top R&B artists. He asked me to help with the financial end. He said he would help me with the castle of hope and I would help him with his finances.

Sharon and I were talking about marriage. I wasn't ready to get married and wanted to live with her first. She wanted to get married first. I talked to the preacher about a church union that was not a legal marriage but a marriage in the eyes of God. He said he could not mention wedding, marriage, husband, or wife. He could bless the union of two souls. Sharon was not too sure about it. Her mother said it was a lot of BS.

Later Samantha and the kids moved in with me. We became closer together. There were times when we thought we should be boyfriend and girlfriend instead of father and daughter. We decided that our relationship was best as father and daughter. I was still seeing Sharon and I had to tell her that Samantha was back.

I explained that we were sleeping in the same bed but we were not doing anything. She believed me and when she finally met Samantha and the kids she was even surer I was being truthful. She and Samantha became friends.

Samantha was pregnant. I was working at Redneck Heaven and she started to have a miscarriage. She called me and I put her on hold and called the front desk of the hotel. The man on the desk called EMS while Samantha and the kids went downstairs. Samantha went to the hospital and a young lady (Janelle) in the building took the kids to her room. When Samantha got back she kept the kids for a while to let her rest.

Samantha said that she had at least fifty calls from the other people who lived in the hotel to see how she was and if she needed anything.

The preacher in the apartment next door fell in love with her. They were thinking about getting married so she decided to divorce her husband, who was out of state.

She was going to get the divorce started and after that go to the leaders of the drug syndicate that her father was a part of. She wanted out, but the leaders wanted her to take over for her father. She told me after the divorce was filed, she was going to try to deal with the leaders. She was going to set up their computer system so that it would streamline their operation in exchange for her freedom.

The time came and went for her return and the boyfriend told me he was worried. He did not know about her past and only knew that she was going to settle the divorce. He called the ex-husband and he said she left two weeks before. He called the sister-in-law and she too said she left two weeks before.

I told him the rest of the story. He said he knew people who could find out about her. I told him to be careful and not put her in more danger.

The other tenants asked me about her and I said I did not know. They all said if she could she would contact me. She couldn't because the leaders knew about me and I was being watched.

The preacher found out that they were not going to let her out. Two guys helped her escape with her kids. She and the kids got away and the two that helped paid with their lives.

That was five years ago. To this day I do not know if she is alive or dead. I know I will never see her or the kids again and I miss them. For a long time the preacher could not work. I have never seen anyone hurt so much. I have seen him a couple of times this year. You can still see that he has not fully recovered. He is preaching but he has not found someone else and may never again.

Later Sharon admitted she still used it. Not as much crack, but she was using marijuana too. I broke up with her and decided to play the field for a while.

I was in the party store next to the hotel. I was talking to the owner when a good-looking woman came in. She was in her forties, light skin, blond hair, and a bootie that would not quit. She was looking good. I told the owner that the booty is why I like black women.

She came to the counter with a forty-ounce beer. She said, "Sam, I am a little short so can I put this on my tab?"

He said, "Sorry, Annie, but it is too high now. Lee has been admiring your booty and I think he will buy it for you."

She smiled and I paid for the beer. I walked her to her room and told her where I lived.

Soon there was a knock on the door. It was her. We talked for a while and before we knew it our clothes fell off and we were in bed. After exploring each other's bodies and enjoying what we found for a while we lay in the bed and talked.

She was a semi-retired bi-sexual call girl. Her father was white and her mother was black. As with most mixed women, she was beautiful. She spent the rest of the night teaching me what a bi-sexual woman knows best. How you please a woman. After that first night she would come back often. She said she taught me so well that she would not charge me. She said I should become a gigolo.

Janelle came to me to ask about Samantha. We talked for a while and she asked me to come to her place for a steak.

I knocked on the door and she answered the door in a sheer red negligee. She said, "Take a shower and I will be waiting in bed. I have had my eye on you ever since you moved in."

She was good. She slipped the condom on so fast I hardly noticed it.

The steak was good too.

Across the hall was Tina. She had her kids on the weekends and would come to my room while they were there to do her crack. We would talk and she would go back to the kids when she came off her high.

The building dealer was usually in the lobby at night. She would go down there and get it, or if he was not there she would call him and he would come to the door.

Towanda was a beautiful young lady. We became close friends when she tended bar at the Chicago Lounge. I would go get a half pint of Martell before closing and give her a ride home. We would sit in the car for a couple of hours and talk while she drank her Martell. If a cop drove by twice, I would walk her to her door and be on my way. Usually that was when the sun came up.

One night I went by the bar and she was there. We talked for a while and went to the party store for the Martell. She wanted to pick up a reefer and we were going to my place to talk. I told her I could get it for her at my place.

We got to my place and I called Annie. She brought up some ice and a joint. The three of us talked for a while and Annie went back down to her room. A couple of hours later Towanda wanted another

joint. I called Annie and she said she would give it to me if I spent some time in bed with her before going back up. I told Towanda that it would take a while and it was worth it.

It was early morning when I took Towanda home.

I was on the bus in the front seat. It was about midnight. This guy, about 18 or 19, was trying to make time with the girl. At first she was polite and listening. He then started going off the wall and she turned the other way and started to ignore him.

He said, "Bitch!" and got up and went to the back.

I said, "Why is a woman always a bitch because she won't talk to an asshole?"

She laughed and he turned to me and said something stupid, so I gave him my famous "leave me alone, MF, or die" look. He went on to the back.

When she rang the bell to get off, he got up. I told her that if he got off I would too and make sure she was okay. She thanked me and got up. I got up with her and he sat down.

When we got to my stop, I got up and he called me a fagot. I looked at him with my "you are dead meat" look and said, "This is my hood, asshole. If you want to get off this bus and get the worst ass kicking of your life, get off with me. If not, sit your dumb ass down and keep your mouth shut."

The bus driver started laughing. The next night I got on the bus and it was the same driver. He laughed and said, "Thanks for making my night last night. It reminded me of the kid and the man about your age that were on my bus the other day. The kid was bugging the guy and I could tell he was getting pissed. I came to a stoplight and the man threw the kid out of the emergency window that was flapping open. The kid got up and headed back to the bus and the light changed so the driver took off, leaving the kid. I think the kid tried to rob him. No one asked and no one saw anything."

I was in a doorway of an abandoned building next to the hotel I lived in. Two drunks were walking by and one tripped. He said, "Jesus Christ!"

I said in a deep voice, "Yes, my son."

The man that tripped said, "Praise the lord and they went on their way."

I was in the corridor at about eleven at night. A hooker came up to me and asked, "Do you want a date?" (Her services.)

I said, "Not now, baby, maybe some other time."

She said, "Let's go into the alley and I will give you a freebie, and if you like it, you can come back for more some other time."

I knew then that it was a set up. I excused myself and started to go when I saw two big guys coming my way. They were both twice my size and I ain't no little guy. It was freezing rain and the sidewalk was too slick to run. The hooker split and I knew I was in deep shit.

The biggest one asked for a cigarette. (Before you are executed, don't you get a last cigarette instead of having to give yours to the executioners?) Then while I was giving the other guy his cigarette the biggest got behind me grabbed me and picked me up.

This guy had a way with words when he said, "This is a hold up."

I busted out laughing. "You are holding me up, so I guess that means that this is a hold up."

While he was holding me up, the other clown was going through my pockets.

I asked, "Could you just take the money and leave my wallet and the pictures of my girlfriend and daughter?"

He took everything including my key. Then he had the balls to say, "Is five all you have?"

(It was pouring down freezing rain and two moronic junkies were robbing me.)

Trying to be helpful to this guy and his career, I said, "What in the hell do you expect from an old white man in the Cass Corridor wearing an old coat and shoes with holes in them? If you are going to make a career of this, you have to stop robbing old people and junkies like you because they do not have the money. Rob people with money. Go out of the hood and rob the rich folks."

They took off down the middle of the street, which was a sheet of ice. Their feet were moving fast but they weren't. After falling four or five times, I still beat them to the next street.

# CHAPTER 8 Northwest Side

This was the third or fourth time I lived with Bernice. We rented a house on the northwest side of Detroit. It was in a neighborhood that had a lot of burned-out houses, prostitution, and drugs. A body was found in a dumpster on the corner.

The police would have decoys. The hookers were usually not real good looking and you could tell many were crack or heroin addicts. The police decoys were good looking, clean, and did not look like addicts.

I saw one on the street standing on the corner. After an hour or so she came into Coney Island. There were three of us watching her. As she walked in we all said, "Hi, officer, how is it going out there?"

She said, "How did you know?"

I said, "You look too good to be a hooker. The johns look at you and know you are a cop. If you want to catch the johns, you have to wear dirty clothes and go a night without sleep so you look like you are an addict."

The next night they had an Asian cop out there in hot pants and a short tank top. I saw him in uniform a few times before.

The slumlord made a lot of promises and kept none of them. I had a job sixty miles north for three days a week and I had a few accounting clients. Money was tight.

Bernice and I were getting in arguments a lot. I would walk out and drive up the block to the all-night Coney Island. One night she called and told me to come home; she started to argue so I hung up. She came up and cut my tire.

A few nights later she had my car. She came home at five in the morning yelling at me about a flat tire. She said I should have known the tire was bad. When I looked at the tire the next day, it had a knife hole in it like the one she put in my tire a few nights before.

I would not let her have the car anymore. When she was out late I would go out. I would go to an all-night restaurant.

Bernice swore she was not doing drugs anymore.

It was three in the morning and Candy came in my room and asked, "Where's Mama?"

I said, "She went to Glenda's, honey."

"I can't sleep, Daddy, will you go get her?"

Candy adopted me; she was a year and a half when I started seeing her mama. She was very insistent that I was her dad. If anyone said different, she would fight. At this time she was five.

I woke up Ray, her nineteen-year-old brother, to watch over her until I brought their mother home.

His father denied fatherhood and his stepfather was a crack addict and dealer. I was his first father figure. He said, "It's about time, Dad. Be tough with her."

I went to Glenda's house and knocked on the door. Glenda let me in and said Bernice was in the kitchen playing cards.

As I went through the living room, there were a few people smoking crack and playing cards. Bernice was coming off her high and I said, "Come on, baby, it's time to go. Candy can't sleep and she needs you."

After some arguing a guy came out of the living room and asked her if everything was all right. I looked at him with a look that could kill. I said, "Unless you want your ass kicked, I would recommend that you keep your mouth shut and get your ass out of here."

He went back into the living room and another guy asked him if there was a problem. He said, "Leave that crazy old white man alone. I think he is packing." I wasn't, but they were.

I said to Bernice, "I am going out to the car. If you don't get your ass out there in ten minutes I am going home and getting my things and

leaving your butt. This time I am not coming back and there is no way in hell you can pay the rent." She was out in five minutes.

I took her home and said, "The next time you are out smoking crack I am out of here." I kept that promise. I moved out the next week.

I was living in a motel and I met Angel. She was a letter carrier. The instant we met we became friends. She was a beautiful woman. She was intelligent and I thought a wonderful person.

Sadly she had a boyfriend who was a complete asshole.

One night she came to me and she was crying. They each had their own rooms and he started bringing in another woman. She saw him with her and she was heartbroken.

She said, "Lee, I need you. Willy is cheating on me and I don't know what to do."

I thought this was my chance to win her over to me. I didn't want her coming to me on the rebound then going back to him when he got rid of the other girl.

I said, "Angel, you know that I would do anything for you. You are one of my favorite people and I will always be here for you. I want to tell you to dump the bastard and come to me. You need to let him go. Even if he gets rid of her, the odds are that he will do it again. Try to put him out of your mind. Enjoy life without him. Do not see anyone for a while. I will be around for you to talk to. I hope we can be together, but you must be sure that we will stay together. If you find someone else, I will still be your friend and I will always be available for you."

That night she wanted to stay with me. I went into the shower, and the next thing I knew she was washing my back. I turned around and saw the most beautiful medium-brown body I have ever seen. All of the parts were perfect. The mountains were firm and smooth. The valleys soft to the touch. I was in love and in lust. I dried her and carried her to the bed.

We kissed and explored each other and a voice in me said, "No, not now."

I said, "Honey, I want to make love to you. I want to make you forget about him. But this is not the time. I will be doing you more harm than good if we do this."

She kissed me and agreed. We held each other and went to sleep. The next night she called me. She did not sound right. She sounded as if she was drugged.

She said, "Lee, I need you. I took some pills."

I ran over to her room and she was lying on the bed. She was almost out and I tried to get her to tell me what she took. She said the bottle was in the garbage. I grabbed the bottle and called poison control. They told me to take her to the hospital, which was five minutes away. I took her to the emergency room and they took her right in. I had her purse with me and gave them her insurance card and what information they needed.

The nurse said, "We are not supposed to let you be with her, but since you are the only one she has and I can see that you have deep feelings for her, you can stay with her. She will be okay. You saved her life."

I asked, "What's going to happen to her now?"

"She will be taken to the psychiatric ward of Oak View Hospital. She will be there for at least thirty days for observation."

I visited her three to four times a week. After the thirty days were up, she was released and I picked her up. While she was in the hospital, I kept her room paid for. She said she would pay me back but I said no.

She went back to the asshole.

A month later she came to me. She said she was going crazy and wanted me to see if I could get her back in. I called the hospital and they said I would have to commit her. They no longer allowed voluntary commitments.

I took her in to the hospital and signed the commitment papers. She was in for another thirty days. She was diagnosed as manic-depressive. There were a couple of times in the past that I thought she might be. That was what was wrong with my fatal attraction.

The company was close to closing down. I had been talking with the Chinese about a large contract. For the past year and a half the boss was living on borrowed money. There was a high mortgage on the property that allowed us to operate and the boss to continue his high lifestyle. The Chinese came through with a big contract the day before we were going to shut the doors.

I had been working 50 miles north of the city and commuting. I was getting tired. I started working 70 hours a week and the drive was getting difficult.

I would come home around ten thirty. I would get in and the phone would ring. It was the lady a couple of doors down. She would say, "Do you want to make the best of the evening?"

Of course I would say, "Get your cute little but over here."

She would come in and spend about an hour with me. She would leave and I would go right to sleep with a feeling of contentment.

Angel got out of the hospital and went back to the same guy. I decided to move to where I was working. I went to see her before I left and her boyfriend was there. He told me he didn't like me telling her to leave him. I told him if she kills herself because of him he will be a dead man.

Almost three years later I was back. A couple that I knew before said that she stabbed him and almost killed him. She is now in the state hospital for the criminally insane. She will probably never get out.

# CHAPTER 9 Way Up North

I was working up north and got tired of commuting sixty miles one way. I moved up north. My first night up there my father saved my life.

My father passed on the fiftieth anniversary of his and my mother's first meeting.

In fifty years they never argued. I lead the *Leave it to Beaver* life. I was Beaver and my brother was Wally. My mother cleaned house and cooked in a dress.

He was the kind of person that everyone liked. He gave everyone a chance. He never let things get him down.

My father's partner had a 1956 T-Bird. He went on vacation and left the car with my dad. I was fourteen and no one was home but me. I took the T-Bird for a ride. Twenty years later my brother and I were telling all. I told my father about the T-Bird and he said, "I knew I should have spanked you when you were a kid."

The only time I heard anything close to an argument was at my brother's wedding reception when he told a dirty joke. My mother looked at him and scolded, "Oh, Bud!"

He was working for Chrysler and took part in a study of smokers and cancer. The study was checking for lung cancer. The doctor told him that he had cancer. My father said, "Okay, doctor, what do we do now?"

The doctor was not used to the patient not being upset. He said, "How can you be so calm? Most patients cry or go into denial."

My father said, "There is no sense in getting upset over what you have no control over. All I can do is have faith in me, you, and God."

He had a bunch of tests and the doctor could not find where it was. My dad mentioned that he started snoring a few years ago and the doctor looked down his throat and saw it. He told my father that he had six months to live.

My father said, "I guess I better get my will together and enjoy what time I have."

The doctor could not believe my father's reaction. Two weeks later he called and said there was a new treatment that could cure him. It was cobalt radiation. For six months he went to the hospital three days a week for his treatment. He had black Xs on his face and neck to mark where the machine was aimed. They said at the end of the six months that it was gone. After five years they said he was cured.

He had cancer two more times and was cured. He had a growth where the first cancer was and the doctor that removed it cut a muscle in error. When he swallowed some food would go into his lungs. He went to the doctor and said he was having a problem swallowing. The doctor said it would be all right soon.

He and my mother moved to Arizona. He went to a doctor there and the doctor explained what had happened and told him he would have to have a tube put in his throat to stop the food from going into the lungs. He also said it may be too late.

It was too late. He passed away within a month. My mother would not sue the first doctor because "It was a mistake."

My father was the nicest man I have ever known. I never heard him say anything bad about anyone. Everyone liked him. Everyone he knew was touched by his kindness. He treated everyone as an equal and never looked down on anyone.

Three years after he passed I was waiting to make a left turn on a two-lane highway. I saw a car in my mirror and it was not slowing down. My father appeared next to me and said, "Relax, son, there is nothing you can do."

The car was totaled; the back seat was in the front. The back bumper was at the back of the front door (It was an Escort.) I was knocked into a car coming from the other direction but luckily my front end only sideswiped the other car.

I got out and when the cop got there he was surprised that I was alive. I was not hurt.

I said to the cop, "I lived in Detroit for fifteen years. I have been robbed twice, shot at twice, and I have been chased by a jealous boyfriend. Never have I come so close to death until I moved up here. I think I will move back to Detroit where it is safe."

The cop laughed and said, "You are right. Detroit is safer than this highway."

I lived there for three years and more friends were injured or lost on that highway than the fifteen years in Detroit.

Soon after, I talked with my mother and told her about seeing Dad. She said, "He is here. I can feel his presence and I know he is watching over me."

My daughter visited and said, "Dad, I could feel Grandpa's spirit."

I went to visit and I knew he was there. At three in the morning there was a knock on the door where I was sleeping. I got up and my mother was sleeping. I said, "Hi, Dad, I'm glad you are with Mom."

I feel that when two people love each other as much as my parents did, the first that passes waits on earth to watch over the other and the children. When my mother passes, they will go to heaven together and from there they will watch over my brother and me.

Whenever I don't know what to do, I ask my father and he will let me know. There are too many people for God to answer all of the prayers, so He has our deceased parents answer ours. Before they passed we went to them and after they pass they are still there for us. They are in our hearts.

Soon after my move I had a call from Bernice. She wanted to get off of drugs and alcohol and she felt if she moved in with me she could quit. Since I loved her I let her move in with Candy. We lived in a motel. The owner had three kids and the oldest was a girl Candy's age.

I still had some clients in the city, so I would go there on Saturdays and in the first half of the month a couple of weekdays.

I was on my way to a client's house. I was on the freeway and the traffic was moving at seventy-five miles per hour. I blacked out, went across three busy lanes of traffic, and hit the guardrail. I came to in the ambulance long enough to say I had no insurance and went back under. The next time I came to was in the emergency room.

I spent three days in the hospital taking tests. Nobody told me anything except that I had high blood pressure. After the second divorce I lost weight and I could not afford medication. My weight was low enough to keep the blood pressure controlled. I kept a close watch on it but I stopped watching it and gained weight.

In the hospital I kept telling them I had no insurance and the doctor told me not to worry about it. (A collection agency came after me for the doctor and hospital bills amounting to over ten thousand dollars. Last time I checked my credit report it showed fifteen thousand dollars.)

When I found a doctor he told me I had a small stroke. In case you were wondering, the car was totaled. Thanks to the stroke, I had no injuries, but it caused the accident. That was the second time in six months that I was in a major accident where the car was totaled.

I also found out that a sore on my ear was cancer. Soon I got health insurance. I had surgery on the ear. A plastic surgeon did the work and did a great job on rebuilding the ear. I then had five weeks of X-ray treatments. The cancer was gone.

Soon Bernice missed the city and wanted to spend weekends with her mother. I soon found out that she was doing drugs and drinking on the weekends. We found out that she was pregnant.

I said, "Bernice, you have to stop drinking and smoking crack. If you don't, the baby may be harmed."

She insisted, "I have quit."

She started spotting and having pain, so we went to the hospital. They gave her an ultrasound and told us to come in on Fridays for the rest of the pregnancy. Two weeks later the ultrasound showed that the baby was no longer there. The doctor said at that time if the baby dies, it disintegrates. He had to do a DNC to take out the placenta.

The doctor could not tell me if Bernice had been using drugs but he could tell me about the baby since I was on record as the father. The baby was a crack baby. He said that it was common when mothers were on crack and he also said a woman should wait five years to have a baby after they quit using. It takes five years to clear out the system.

She wanted to rent a house but we could not because she was spending too much money. She said that we would not have lost the baby if we had gotten out of the motel.

One Thursday a friend of hers from the city came up. She wanted to go out with her and said she would be back by eleven.

I said, "You can go but you have to take Candy to someone else because you said that too many times and I would not see you until the next day. I have to get to work in the morning and I can not take a chance on being stranded with Candy."

She took Candy to a friend's house that had a girl Candy's age. Friday night she called me and asked me, "Please, come and get

me?"
I said, "You got yourself down there. You can get yourself back."
She asked, "Where is Candy?"

I answered, "She is with Denise and she is pissed. She will keep her until you get back but I don't think she will baby-sit again. If you go out again, take Candy with you, and if you don't come back when you say you will, stay there and I will drop your things off at your mother's."

Saturday she called and said, "We stopped at a bar to go to the bathroom and some guys beat me up. Mary left me. Please pick me up."

One thing she did not realize is that I know everyone she knows and her family thinks of me as a part of the family. I can find out anything about her to this day from them. I picked her up and she repeated her story. I told her that I knew that Mary beat her up and that she was having an affair with her. She denied it.

I would take her and Candy to the city Saturday morning and see my clients. I picked her up and she was high. When she was high, she argued and picked fights. We argued all the way home.

Mary came back up and got a room. I told Bernice that she and Cookie could stay with her. Mary went back after two weeks and Bernice wanted to stay with me again. I would not let her, so her mother came and took her back to the city.

With Bernice gone, things looked like they were going to settle down. The mortgage on the plant and residence was paid down considerably. The boss was convinced that he had to cut down on his lifestyle. The China contract lasted almost a year then sales dropped again. The wife got a barracuda for an attorney and filed for divorce, just after the China deal was into effect.

Her attorney convinced her that the boss had all kinds of money in the Cayman Islands. He had secret business partnerships all over the country and a yacht in Chicago. All of this was bullshit. The sad thing is that the judge believed her too. There was no evidence, but the judge did not care about evidence.

To top it off, the wife helped the new judge get elected, and according to sources that were involved with the campaign, the judge was seen making time with her. I made all kinds of reports that proved that the company was in trouble. I submitted proof of the boss's income. The lawyer said he made five times as much. There was no evidence to back her up, but the judge set child support based on what the lawyer said.

Her lawyer was deposing me, and her questions were stupid. She was using lies to make me look bad. Earlier she had an outside accountant come in and look at the records. He took some of the total payments to the boss and said that was his income. I had a schedule for three years that showed where the money paid the mortgage. He also neglected to show the money coming in. It turned out that he was not even qualified to do the audit work he did. In fact, out of court he said my figures were right. In court that was not the question.

I got fed up and said, "You are a lying, conniving bitch. I do not have to put up with your bullshit. I am leaving."

Her lawyer said, "I will have you thrown in jail."

I said, "They have to find me first. I can disappear in Detroit and you will never see me again."

The boss's lawyer, who was in a state of shock, came running after me. He begged me to come back. I could not stand to see a grown man cry, so I went back. I felt sorry for him because I would threaten to quit a lot and it would scare the shit out of him. I was the only one that knew about the finances of the companies. It did not matter, though, because the judge would not listen to me or look at the evidence.

I was having a hard time because there were no single black women in the area. Detroit was too far, so I started going to Flint, which had a large black population. It was half the distance of Detroit and freeway all of the way.

Cloud Nine is a topless bar in a depressed town. It was in the closest town to where I was living where I could find black women. Most of the time half of the dancers were white and half were black.

The black dancers would dance for me and I would give them a booty rub as the danced. They loved it, and if I did not have the money, they danced anyway for the booty rub.

One of the white dancers came up to me and asked, "Why don't you ever ask the white dancers to dance for you?"

I answered, "No offense, Jane, but I am only attracted to black women. I like you as a person but there is no sexual feeling."

"We want the booty rubs too, Lee."

"Jane, I am sorry, but white women have no booty to rub. I have to admit that your booty is nice but I can't take a chance that could ruin my reputation."

I met up with a dancer that was a cute little thing with a body that would not quit. Her stage name was Delicious. (My ex-girlfriend Sharon danced under the name Miss Delicious.) She was engaged to a gansta rapper who recently got out of prison. He had an album out and he went to the schools to talk the kids out of gang banging. He was shot thirteen times in a gunfight and went to prison.

Delicious said, "Doug is cheating on me and I am ready to leave him. When I do we can get together. I am going to talk to him after work."

I told her, "My concern is your happiness. If he straightens out and you want to give him a chance, I understand. Just remember that no matter what you have me to talk to."

The next day she introduced me to Kat, Doug's sister.

Kat was tall and slim. Light complexion, in fact the lightest I have been with. We hit it off right away.

Kat had a hard life. She was sexually abused by her father and he went to prison for it. Every man she was with abused her except for the father of her daughter, who was murdered. She did not trust men and had no plans of being with one. She lived with a lesbian but she said they were not lovers. In fact the lesbian wanted her and me to be together. She was afraid to go out because she was afraid of falling in love again. She wanted me around when she worked and asked me to give her at least six months.

The bouncer would let me in without a cover charge, and when I was low on money, the waitresses and barmaid would give me water and an occasional free cola.

Sometimes I would sit at a table and have a dancer on each knee and one or two more at the table. It would drive the other customers crazy. They all liked me because I treated them like ladies and I never downed them. I was honest and treated them with respect.

Every Friday night they had a contest. Either the dancers were the participants or the customers would get involved. My favorite was the nipple-sucking contest. Four dancers would each pick a customer. Four chairs were put on the stage. The customers would be blind folded and the dancers would take off their shirts.

When Kat brought me up, the DJ said, "We have a gray-haired old man and three young guys. Let's find out if experience can win."

When the DJ said go, the dancers put baby bottles full of beer in our mouths and the first one finished won. I was first. That was the first beer I had in five years. When you drink though a nipple, it hits you faster. I almost fell off the stage.

I told the DJ that he was lucky I am a reformed drunk and not a recovering alcoholic.

I would sit at the stage and Kat would be talking to a customer or dancing for him and I could see her in the mirrored walls. I would look like I was watching the dancer on stage and I would be watching Kat.

If she was with a customer she did not trust, she would look in the wall mirror and I would give her a sign that I was watching then say, "See the big gray-haired guy at the table in front of the stage?"

The customer would say, "Yes."

She would continue, "That is my man. He watches me because he doesn't trust the bouncer to come to my rescue when I have a problem."

Disbelieving, the guy would say, "He's watching the dancer."

"Watch this." She would motion to the mirror and I would jump up and start to go to her. She would motion for me to sit down and I would go back to looking like I am looking at the dancer. The customer would be no problem and we think he tipped better too.

Kat was supporting two kids. During the night she would come to my table between customers to get her calculator and book. She would keep track of her tips and at the end of the night pay her rent to the bar and the DJ. She was good at keeping records and making sure the bills were paid.

The boss's divorce was final. The wife got all of the real estate and the boss got the company. We got some more business from China but we did not have the money to fill the order. The foreman had good credit so he started a company and filled the orders.

The company had an auction and went out of business thanks to the judge from hell giving everything of value to the wife and draining the company of working capital.

You may have heard the saying, "What goes around comes around."

There was a lawsuit in the background. The wife's lawyer could have stopped it because it was against a company in the wife's name. The lawyer figured they would go after the husband and the main company, so she helped the plaintiff.

Because of her good work in the divorce and the judge's hatred for my boss, the boss and the main company were uncollectable. The company that was originally sued was insolvent. The ex-wife had all of the assets, so they went after her. She is now broke. If it weren't for the wife's greed, the incompetence of her attorney, and the ignorance of the judge, the company would have survived.

It is my understanding that the judge was always hard on the men in divorce cases. I also feel that his grasp of the law was not too good. I could not believe that a judge could ignore the law and do as he pleases. I know I had a lot of contempt for his court.

I lost my job and Kat asked me to move there instead of going to back to the big city. She said she would help me build my business there and I could go to the city when I needed to for those clients.

I tried, but my ex-girlfriend's daughter was having problems with the law in the city. She needed a father. I told Kat she could make more money and work less in the city, but she was afraid to go.

I told her, "Life with you is a dream. We have a wall between us and it is not coming down. You try but then get scared and back down. I have a little girl that needs me in the city. As long as I am unattached, if you decide to come down I will welcome you. Now you are a dream and the little lady is reality. I need to go home."

I still miss her sometimes. I hope to see her again someday.

# CHAPTER 10 Back to Petroit

Shirley told me that Nancy was in trouble with the law. She was on the way to school and the police picked her up. They never bothered to call her. At seven in the evening she was in the juvenile detention facility. It was her first chance to call home.

She was accused of beating up a boy who happened to be the police sergeant's nephew. The kid had a habit of causing trouble and calling his uncle. In this case she was not the one who beat the kid up; she was with two other girls who beat him up. The other girls said that she had nothing to do with the beating. She pled not guilty.

She got the same judge for this one. It was with the same girls. In this case, a girl spit on her and she yanked the girl's ponytail. Her friends got in too and a fight started. In this case the hair pulling was a battery and it started the fight.

Nancy was fifteen and a beautiful young lady. She was also the kind of girl (like her mother) that you instantly like. The problem was her friends. The first case was dismissed and she pled guilty to this case.

While we were waiting for sentencing, we found out how bad things were. She would say she was spending the night at a friend's house. The friend would say she was staying at Nancy's. The mothers never checked.

Nancy was drinking and smoking pot. She had been doing that for three years and her mother never caught on. There was also a pedophile coming around. He was a white man in his fifties with a good job with one of the auto companies. When he was caught, he had an album with one hundred fifty pictures of black girls between the ages of twelve and fifteen. Nancy was not in there. He approached her to recruit for him.

He pled guilty and got a short jail term and probation. (If the girls were white he probably would have gotten a long jail term.) If he goes back to the neighborhood, he will probably be killed.

To me the minimum sentence for pedophiles should be life with no parole or death.

Nancy was sentenced to six months in a girl's detention facility. She went to a good facility run by the Catholic Church. The judge said that she would be under her control until she was eighteen. The weekend before she was supposed to be released, she came home on a pass. When she went back, she tested positive for alcohol.

She was then sent to a treatment center for six months. After that she ended up in the Catholic facility and stayed there until she was eighteen.

I lost contact with her mother. She called a little while ago and we talked about getting back together. I haven't heard from her since. I do know she is working midnights as a security supervisor. Nancy is living with her mother.

Well, here we are at another bar. This time instead of a redneck bar, it was a black-owned bar with a black clientele.

I was at a steak house and a young lady came in that looked a lot like my second wife. I was about three blocks away from where she lived and I thought, "Oh, oh, I have to get out of here."

It wasn't her. She sat next to me and we talked. Her name was Janette.

"You had me scared," I said, "I thought you were my ex-wife."

We talked for a while and her boyfriend came in. He was white, a cop, and named Bill. By this time we were like brother and sister. She introduced me to her boyfriend and she mentioned her bar and asked me to come by.

I went to Janette's bar and she introduced me to her sister, Tanya, who helped run the bar. I sat with Bill at the end of the bar and we got

to know each other. His partner and other black cops came in and suddenly I found myself talking to a bunch of cops. The other cops realized that I was an OERO (reverse Oreo) and we all got along well.

A few days later I told Bill, "You are the first white cop that I've liked."

His partner patted me on the back and said, "You are a brother and we agree with you."

(As a side bar—at this time I did not drink alcohol. I drank mostly cola.)

I was living in a motel and had an office. I was thinking about moving into my office and Janette said, "Why don't you move into the bar? You can clean up between closing and opening and make the runs to the party store when we are open. When we have parties or entertainment, you can be the bouncer on the door for five fifty an hour. You can collect the cover charge, check women's purses, and frisk the men."

I said, "I will try it."

After two weeks I decided to move into my office, but Janette wanted me to come in at six Wednesday through Saturday. I would get the ice, stock the bar with the beer from the back room, clean up, and open the bar at seven. She or her daughter Tanya would come in at eleven and take over.

Now I was tending bar again. This time the customers were more my type of people. When they first walked in the stopped and almost walked out.

I called to them, "Wait, you have the right place. Just ignore the color of my skin. The barmaid comes in at eleven. Have a drink, and if you wish, come back when the women get here." Soon I had some regular customers. Wednesday and Thursday nights were slow.

Janette told me to lock the door and only open it when the first customer comes in. I told her it was too much trouble and that the customers would think I was afraid. In the hood you never show fear, especially if you are a gray-haired white man.

Four young guys came in. The biggest one asked for a shot of tequila.

I said, "If you have valid ID, I will sell it to you. If you do not, you can have pop and shoot pool. You have to sit at a table."

The guy smiled, pulled out a wad of bills, went past a couple of hundreds for a fifty and said, "Sell me a fifth and we will go. I'll give you fifty for it."

I laughed and said, "If I sell you a fifth, you and your posse may go out and get yourselves killed. Or you may be a cop just waiting to bust my ass. Why don't you and your buddies take your young asses out of here."

He said, "No problem, old man. Thanks anyway."

"Come back when you are old enough and take care, guys," I said and they left.

A big dude came in. My first thought was that he was a cop. (Cops are usually good tippers.)

I asked, "How are you doing, officer?"

He looked at me, smiled, and asked, "How did you know?"

"I always know. I have been on both sides of the law and I can usually spot a cop a mile away," I answered.

We talked for a while and a young lady came in. She was a prison guard.

He was narc and arrested dealers, she guarded the dealers after he arrested them, and I bought from dealers for my lady. We were talking about the dealers that would get busted first and the ones that would get busted last. What's the difference? you ask. Good question.

The dealers that sell to kids get busted first. Then the dealers that are obvious and where the neighbors complain. The last ones are the ones that help the people in the hood and do not sell to kids.

For example, an old lady had her purse snatched. The dealer saw it and went after the guy. When the cops got there, the dealer was coming back with the purse. The cop asked where the thief was and the dealer said, "He tripped and fell when I was chasing him. He is a couple of blocks down that street. I think he hurt himself pretty bad when he fell."

After the thief got out of the hospital, he went to jail. Witnesses said he tripped and fell and the dealer got the purse and returned it. The dealer made sure his customers did not cause a problem in the hood. If they did, they were told not to come back; if they did come back, they learned why they should not come back.

The next customer was a guard in the county jail. He said, "You look familiar. Did you ever work in the county jail?"

The narc laughed and said, "He was on the other side of the bars." I enjoyed tending bar at this place. The customers were more enjoyable than the other place. The tips were good from the cops and the women.

I never had a problem when I refused to serve someone because they looked too young and had no ID. In the redneck bar, half of my time was keeping the peace and I got hit in the jaw twice. Here there were no threats, no problems. I was accepted by the customers as one of them.

I was back to living in my office in a neighborhood that was pretty nice. At night it would change. You would see the homeless and the hookers. They were there during the day but more noticeable at night.

There was a young man who looked like he was around twenty. He was about six feet, six inches tall. He was quiet and really didn't bother anybody, but at night he would be hanging out by a bar. When people came out, they would see him and his size and the blank look on his face would scare them.

I don't think he was dangerous. He would stand for hours in one spot like a statue. The police decided to get him out of the neighborhood, so they picked him up and dropped him off out of the city. By the time they got back to where they picked him up, he was standing there.

He would go into the party stores and gas station markets and get cookies and cakes and eat them right there. He would put the wrappers in the garbage and walk out. No one would say anything to him.

One day he was found in the dumpster. The word on the street was that a storeowner or owners did it.

One of the hookers used to stop and talk to me every once in a while. One night there was a knock on the door. A man said she was in his car and needed help. I went to the car and she had metal sticking out of her leg and had a wheelchair. She was a victim of a hit and run down the street. (A few hookers were lost that way.) I brought her in and called a cab for her. I gave her some money to cover cab fare and a night in a motel.

I didn't see her for a while. The cab driver brought her by. He took her in. I haven't seen here since.

When Bernice got back to the city, she rented a house down the street from where she was before and Mary moved in. Mary would beat her and one time tried to put lye down her throat. A nephew found out, and when Mary came out, he beat her up and almost killed her. The neighbors were all out watching and she was told that if she beat on Bernice again, she was going to get beat up worse and all of the neighbors would swear she fell. She left.

About two years later when I was back in the city, Bernice had a stroke (one month after her fortieth birthday). I told her that it was the best thing for her because it made her quit using drugs and alcohol. I slept on her Lazy Boy chair and helped her out for a while. A month later she had another stroke and quit smoking cigarettes. Now I am happy to say that she is doing well. She is getting around with a cane. She has to relearn how to drive using her left foot, I guess.

She called me and said she was getting married but she wanted me. I told her that I will always be her friend and whenever she needs me I will be available for her, but marriage is out. I could never trust her. Every time she was late I would think she was back on drugs. I would always in the back of my mind blame her for the loss of our baby.

The cancer came back. I am waiting for a good health insurance to kick in so I can have it cut out. I feel the plastic surgeon was so careful to make the ear look right that he missed some at the top.

Now the top of the ear is eaten away. I want it cut off so that all of the cancer is gone. I will just cover it with my hair.

### CHAPTER 11

# A New Millennium, A New Life, Powntown

Lisa was tall and skinny. She was about forty-five when I met her. Because of her crack addiction she looked older. I saw a picture of her taken before her crack addiction and she was a living doll. She lived with Mary (a different Mary) who was short and heavy. Mary dressed like a boy and wore her hair like a boy. Both were good people.

When I cooked, Lisa would be knocking on my door when it was ready. I smoke little cigars and she would come and visit for the smell of them.

One time a big guy was at her place and he went wacko when on some drugs. Lisa came to me to help her get him out. I have a way of talking to people who are drunk or high on drugs.

I got him calmed down and out of the building.

After I had been there for about six months, she was evicted. I see her every once in a while in the corridor.

Bill and Gill were brothers. Bill would bring girls to my room and drop them off. He and Gill were both addicts and they sold drugs to keep their habits going. Eventually Bill went to rehab and has been clean and sober for over a year. He has a job and is doing well.

Gill had a wife, Robin. Robin was a cute little lady with a mouth that did not stop. Gill would cheat on her often. He would drop her off at my place and go do his thing.

Before I said that I would not mess with a man's woman if he treated her right. I also feel that what is good for the goose is good for the gander. If one is cheating then the other has the right to cheat. Divorce may be the best answer, but if you cannot afford to divorce, a mutual game playing may be the next best thing.

Gill may have thought that Robin and I would just talk, but I do not think he was stupid. It got to where she was happy he was messing around because we had some fun while he was gone.

Jenny was a cute little thing. She was in her thirties and until recently I had never seen her without being high or without her mouth going a mile a second, trying to get money for more crack. Since she cut down, I have noticed what I always thought. She is a very nice person and seems to be intelligent.

I met Jenny soon after I moved in to the building. We had a fling or two or more. I also bought clothes from her. For twenty dollars I got an Adidas coat and a nice sexual interlude.

She was planning to go to rehab and didn't want me to get lonely, so she brought a replacement for me. She didn't go to rehab, so I had two coming by.

The problem was that she would come by as late as three in the morning. I would be sleeping and hear a tapping on the door. I would roll over and the tap would become a knock. I would cover my ears and the knock would become a bang.

I would open the door and say, "What in the hell do you want?" (Dumb question.)

She would say, "Did I wake you?" (I guess at three in the morning we all ask dumb questions.)

I told her, "Jenny, I like you and I enjoy our time together. After midnight on weeknights I do not function well. Please do not come back at this time again."

Of course that did not stop her.

She would knock on the door and walk right in and take her clothes off. I would say, "Sorry, honey, I don't have time," or "Put your clothes back on, I have company," or "I want it, I want it, I want it."

Jenny and I got to be pretty close; then I did not see her for a while. They got new security guards and they would not let her in the building. A few months ago she had a stroke and a massive heart attack. I saw her a couple of weeks ago and she was looking good.

She lived with a guy in a nice high rise a few blocks away. He let her have everything she wanted. I think he is running low on money because two days ago she tried to sell me a coat.

The other day she came by. She moved out of downtown. She said that she got an ID, so she will be able to visit when she is in the neighborhood. I had missed her cute little body. She had cut down on crack but it looked like she was still using.

When I met Eva she was 21 but looked like she was 15. Just as I walked into the lobby, she pulled her pants down and mooned a friend. When we first met she wanted me to be her uncle. Then she wanted me to be her man. I told her what she needed now was a father. She immediately adopted me as her father. She tells everyone that I am her father.

She was raised around drugs. Her mother is in prison on drug charges. She was with her uncle when the cops pulled him over. He was busted for possession of crack. She had a joint in her pocket, so she got busted for possession.

I do not know how she stayed away from crack. She quit using weed but still drinks. I am trying to teach her about life. She knows the streets but she doesn't know the world outside of the streets. She has a problem with trusting the wrong people and with spending money on clothes and not having enough to pay the bills. She is doing better now. She is working two jobs.

Her mother was getting out of prison. She used to live in the building I live in. She went to prison before I moved in. Eva moved to a house just before her mother came home. She put the deposit on it and paid the rent.

Her mother got out and spent more time in this building with her crackhead friends than her daughter. She stole the rent money from Eva and told everyone Eva stole it from her. I told Eva that if she wasn't careful her mama was going to get her sent to jail.

I live two blocks from the Detroit Tigers' home stadium. At the end of a ball game the street is full of cars. On a night of fireworks and a sold-out ball game, there are over a million and a half people downtown.

Her mama was walking down the middle of the street drunk and high on crack. I do not know how she missed getting hit by a car.

Luckily for Eva, her mother was sent back to prison within a couple of months. Her mama's friends were kicked out of the building. Eva lives and works about fifty miles away. She stays with relatives who are not on drugs.

About once a month she comes for a visit. We order a pizza and talk. I give her money to pay her ride and she heads for home. She calls a couple of times a week.

Her mother will be getting out soon. I hope she stays away from the addicts this time and I hope she goes back to being a mother. Eva needs her mother clean and sober. She had a hard life and no one showed her love until I came around.

If her mother comes back and goes back to the drugs, I am afraid it may ruin all of the progress we have made. Eva sounds tough, but she is a very fragile young lady.

She just called. Talk about coincidence. She is moving back to the city. I will see her more but she will be back around the people who get her in trouble.

Nancy (not the one that calls me Daddy Two) was twenty-four when I met her but she looked younger. She is petite and has a beautiful body. She has a personality that could help her getting jobs working with the public. But she has a drug and alcohol problem.

I met her and we instantly clicked. After a while she needed a place to stay. I told her she could stay with me but if she came home after midnight during the week she could not come in. I was not going to wait up for her and as long as she was addicted I was not going to give her the key. The first night was fine. The second night I said she had to find another place.

If she needed a place for a night, she could stay for a night.

Nancy is addicted to weed and alcohol. I think she uses crack every once in a while but not often.

The people that want to legalize weed are wrong. I see what it does every day. I have seen kids go from the honor roll to failing because of weed. After a while the weed loses its ability to give you the high you want so you drink alcohol too. Soon the high from that combination is not like it was so you go to crack. Now they have a more potent heroin out there. It is gives you a better high, and if you are afraid of that needle, you can smoke it.

Now you are smoking weed, crack, and heroin and drinking a beer or six and your brains are getting fried, dead, and laid to the side. Pretty soon you have no more problems because you are dead.

This is where Nancy was headed. I see her once a month. She comes to me and tells me she loves me and wants to be with me. I tell her to clean up her act and we can give it a try.

The sad thing about her is that she is in constant danger, not only from the drugs but from the dealers, other addicts, and crazy people out there that would love to rape her.

Nancy is a probation violator and if she is busted she can go to prison for a few years.

William is a man in my apartment building with one leg. He has two wheelchairs. One is electric, which is used to go to the store. The other is manual, which he uses for panhandling. He lives on the twelfth floor. My apartment is next to the stairway. I heard a banging on the stairs. I went to the stairway and he was crawling down the stairs, dragging his chair. The main elevators were out so I told him to go to the freight elevator and I would call down to have it sent up.

This man gets around. I see him on the street a lot. He moves along and when people come by, he holds his hand out for money. He is one of the lucky ones. He did not lose his leg because of drug addiction so he gets disability and Medicare. Many of the ones missing limbs are drug addicts and homeless. When it is warm they live in the bus shelters.

I saw one man with one leg and no crutches. He would hop to his spot and sit on the sidewalk and beg. There is a young man with no legs. He gets around laying on his stomach on a mattress that is on a table top on his wheelchair. He gets around pretty well. I haven't noticed him begging. The sad thing is that most of them are there because of drug abuse. When you keep shooting up in the legs, you get open sores and eventually gangrene.

Dwight is a Desert Storm veteran. He talks to himself. He sees me in the street and will start talking to me. It would be about nothing. On the rare occasion that he talked sense, you would get his story. He always asks me if I have coffee to give him.

One day he was in his room yelling and throwing things. His neighbor called the police. They knocked on the door and told him to open the door. He said no. So they left. A few minutes later he went

outside and they were waiting for him. They took him to the VA hospital.

I was on the bus. There was a big guy in front of me. He had a football helmet on. He was talking into his hand. I figured from the conversation that he thought he was a secret agent. He told the agents in a car to pick up the spies in a 1969 red and white Chevy.

Many of the street people belong in institutions. They do not have the ability to live in the outside world. They do not take their medication and some seem to be dangerous to themselves and possibly others. Many are drug addicts and/or alcoholics. Some are hiding from the world.

Matt was a security guard for the building. He was also schizophrenic. As long as he took his medication he was fine. He ran out of medication and was smoking pot. He fell asleep and had a dream that he was being chased by guys with guns. There was a knock on his door and he grabbed a gun and shot four shots through the door. He opened the door and Fred was lying on the floor with blood all over his shirt. Matt shot him two more times.

We all liked Matt and we also liked Fred. Fred was dead on the scene. He was a nice old man and he had helped a lot of people. He and Matt were good friends.

The day before Matt called his doctor and asked him for more pills. The doctor said he would have to wait a couple of days. Is Fred's death the fault of Matt, the system, or the doctor?

When God made Sandy, he broke the mold. Old corny saying, but in her case it is true. There is no way there can be another one.

Sandy is a gem. No man can have her. She is a no-man woman. She does what she wants when she wants to. She lives with a man who thinks she is his lady. Everyone tells him she is her lady. She tells him she is his roommate and that is it. Sandy is an alcoholic. She no longer uses crack but every once in a while may share a joint with someone.

She knows everything that goes on in the building and in the streets. If she needs someone to talk to, she comes to me. If I need someone to talk to, she is at my door. If I want to know about a woman, she tells me the whole story.

Sandy also likes sex. She comes to me when she wants a good booty rub plus. Sometimes she comes in and we talk and she goes. Sometimes on her way out she asks, "When can I get a booty rub?"

I tell her, "When you want to talk, we talk, and when you want sex, take off your clothes and get on the bed, I will get the hint."

Sandy is short and thick. She has beautiful breasts and a booty that won't quit. A couple of years ago she was shot in the back of the head. The bullet came out through her chin. She was not supposed to survive, but the only way you can tell is the scar on the chin and her speech is slurred.

She was also in a fire near that time and jumped from the fourth floor. Broke all kinds of bones. She now has a distinctive walk. When it comes to street smarts, Sandy is the best. She will go anywhere at anytime and not worry about the streets. I don't think anyone is stupid enough to give her a problem.

One of the best things about Sandy is that she never asks for money unless it is my change that she uses for bus fare. She sometimes gets my pop bottles. She always wants some of my little cigars.

Sandy is honest and she does not hold her tongue. If you want the truth about something, ask Sandy. If you don't want the truth, don't ask Sandy. When someone is out of line, Sandy sets him or her straight. When someone is in danger she will warn him or her.

Sandy has come into my life and made it better. She has given me something that few others have given me. She has given me more wisdom and more drive to do what I want to do.

What worries me about Sandy is that she still spends time with the addicts. I worry that she will stop saying no when she is around the crack and heroin. But then I realize that I say no to alcohol when I am asked and when I go to a bar. When I get the rehab going, Sandy will be one of my key people.

Good news about Sandy. She has a good job and is renting an upper flat by herself. She stopped drinking, smoking pot, and running the streets. I hope she can keep it that way.

I was waiting for a bus and one of my favorite winos came up to me. He said, "You look like Santa Claus," and he ran his fingers through my hair. I gave him a cigarette and the bus came.

I was coming back home and I got off the bus at my favorite girl-watching corner. It is in the Wayne State University campus, and many good-looking college girls go by while I wait for the next bus.

Behold, I heard my favorite wino, "Santa, how are you?"

I looked at my watch and I had about ten minutes before the bus would come. I was thinking, "Ten minutes with this guy talking to me. The girls going by see Santa and the wino shooting the bull on the corner."

He said, "I knew you five years ago. You didn't have the beard then. You lived in the Hotel Park Avenue."

I was surprised that he remembered me. I have seen him a lot over the past two years. He saw me as I was growing the beard and mustache so he has seen me without them. This man is mentally ill. Because of the laws, since he is not a threat to himself or society, he is in the street, unable to work and homeless instead of a group home or an institution where he belongs. Sometimes when I see him we say hi to each other, and the other times he may shoot me the finger.

This time he was in a talkative mood. He actually almost made sense.

Just before the bus came, he asked where I lived. I told him that I was down the street from where I was before. He said, "Can I come home with you?"

I said, "I'm sorry, but I am in a small studio apartment. There is not enough room for two men. Otherwise I would let you come." (It was a small studio and there was not enough room, but I would not let him come if I had the room.)

Finally the bus came. I said good-bye and got on the bus.

He got on and said to the driver, "I'm a retired DOT employee and but I forgot my ID."

The driver said, "Sorry, you have to get off."

After he got off, I thanked the driver and he smiled, knowing the wino wanted to adopt me.

Someday I hope I will be able to help him and the other lost and forgotten souls. When my book comes out, the proceeds will help my friend and the others like him.

This is a hard story to tell because it hasn't ended yet. God only knows what the ending will be if he looks into our future. I feel that He allows us to determine our own destiny by our actions so he may not even know.

Mandy is a very pretty lady. She is forty but when she is clean she looks like she is thirty and sometimes she looks like a kid. She is petite. I can pick her up and kiss her with her feet off the ground. I can

carry her around with not effort. She is very intelligent and she has a heart of gold. When you talk to her, you instantly like her.

She worked as a bank teller and had a good future with the bank. She could be a branch manager now if it weren't for one problem. Mandy is a crack addict.

When she is high, she goes into a trance. She looks like a little girl who was bad and is waiting for punishment.

A few years ago Mandy came to the building I live in. At the time it was a building full of addicts, dealers, and hookers. When I moved in, the management was cleaning it out. Some of the addicts are still here.

Mandy met a man who was a loan shark. She started using drugs when she was with him. They lived in the building. The police came one night and had a talk with him. They told him that he had to find a new profession or they were going to bust him.

Mandy moved out of his place and shared an apartment with a female friend. While she was visiting the guy they were watching a movie, *US Marshals*. US marshals busted in. He was arrested for drugs and loan sharking. Since Mandy was in the room when he got busted, she was evicted and banned from the building.

When I met her, it was a date. She had dates to support her habit. (She was a hooker.) For me this was supposed to be a sexual experience only. Before long we fell in love. I had competition.

The competition was crack and it still is.

I talked to the manager and he said Mandy could come into the building again. She was losing her place and I offered her a place to stay. No drugs in the apartment. No addicts in the apartment. After midnight if she left, she could not come back in.

She tried to cut down. The first two nights were okay. The third night, she did not make it. She came in at about eleven. She moved slowly and talked slow and soft. She was constantly looking around and every noise was a mystery. Her eyes were wide. She looked like a child that had done something wrong.

She went into the bathroom and closed the door. She was in there along time. Finally I said I had to pee. She came out and I went in. I could smell the crack but I held my tongue. I went back to my desk and worked on the Internet. She had her hand on the door and when I wasn't looking she started to open the door.

I said, "If you go out that door, do not come back." She left and I locked the door and went to sleep.

During the winter she was homeless. I told her when she needed a place to stay she could spend the night with me but she had to be clean (not high). Once she was in, it was for the night. I was not going to get up in the middle of the night to let her in.

I would talk to her about rehab. She had a son who used weed. I heard her talking to him and he was talking about smoking five or more blunts spiked with weed a day. She could not say anything. What she was doing was much worse. I told her about herself. She also has a little girl who was a crack baby. The baby has problems because of it. We talked a long time and she was saying she wanted to quit.

She would promise that she was going in the next day and wanted to get some crack for her last time. I told her as long as she did that she would not go in. She would not go in.

She promised many times and a couple times went in. She would go through the five-day detox program and not go back for the thirty-day program.

I would tell her to come back after the thirty day program. She would knock on my door a few days later she would be clean and she would tell me she was staying clean.

As soon as I would take her back she would come in high again.

I haven't seen her in a week. She called the other day and said she would be in to see me in an hour and not show. Yesterday she called and said her food stamps were added to her card so she was going to get me some groceries. She would be here in a couple of hours. That was ten thirty in the morning and I am still waiting at five thirty the next afternoon.

Everyone that knows her wants me to keep trying and they tell her that I am the only one she can depend on and she is close to losing me. I told her that as long as she was using crack I was going to see other women. I see three other women now, and if Mandy gets rid of her habit, they know that she is the only one I will be with. If she takes too long and one of the others straightens out their act I may end up with that one.

I love Mandy, but I will not compete with crack. As long as a woman is abusing drugs and alcohol, I will not commit to her. All of

these women know about each other and they know each other. A friend of theirs just had her heart explode because of drugs. You would think that would be enough to get a person to quit.

As I have said many times, she has said that she wanted to quit. As long as I am around she thinks she does not have to stop. The next time I see her I will tell her that I will not see her as long as she is on drugs. This time I will stick to it. It worked with Sharon. Maybe it will work with Mandy.

Maxine was in the lobby talking to the security guard. She was full of vim and vigor. She said what she meant and did not hold back. I gave her my room number and told her to come up sometime.

There was a knock on the door. It was a knock that I did not recognize. It was Maxine.

She was little at the top, medium in the middle, and big at the bottom. Sort of like those blow-up toys that you knock down and they keep popping up. On her it looked good. We became friends. We could talk freely to each other. If she had a problem I was there for her.

She felt that she had her vices under control. She drank a lot; she had her pot when she could get it, and every once in a while she had some crack. She was a full-blown crack addict, but after rehab she cut it down to every once in a while. She would come to me for beer money at times—maybe enough for a joint. Afterwards she may come back for some fun in bed.

Maxine just got a job with a dry cleaner. Hopefully she will cut out the drugs and cut down on the alcohol. We have a very good relationship. We have a deep respect for each other. Not quite love. She is a free spirit and so am I.

After three days of calls saying that she would be here in an hour, Mandy showed up one morning.

She did not look high, but she did look like she was mentally unbalanced. It was like she was going in and out of reality.

She was talking normally, then she said, "I smell a dog. My nose is playing tricks on me. I see dog shit on the floor. My eyes are playing tricks on me."

Then she would be back to normal. She told me she was with some friends. She smelled a dog and asked her friends. One said yes and the other said no. The one that said yes was high and the one that said no was not. She decided she smelled things. I don't think she realized

that she went though that a few minutes ago with me.

She is also going through paranoia. The hall carpeting was removed and the floor is concrete. Footsteps and the opening of the elevator doors echoes in the hallway and into my room. The stairway is next to my room, so when someone uses the stairs it sounds like they are walking in my room.

This drives her crazy. She hears the noises and thinks someone is coming for her.

There were times when she would call me and tell me someone was in her room. Even at my place she would check the closet and bathroom, thinking someone was in the room listening to us.

I told her that it was time for rehab. If she doesn't do something now, she may end up in as asylum or on the streets talking to herself. The drugs are messing with her brains. It may be too late. I hope not.

As she left she told me that she was going to rehab. She said she knows that if she doesn't go she is doomed. She has said it before.

Pray for her. She is a good woman with a bad habit. She needs help and she needs to let the real Mandy out.

As of the time I am finishing this portion of the book, Mandy is still using crack. She started drinking more. She is still saying she is going in tomorrow and not. This lady could be whatever she wants, but she is a crackhead. She chose crack over those she loves. She is a lost soul and I pray that she finds herself.

She said she wants to work on the Castle of Hope with me. She has to find herself first.

Last week she came to me. Another friend died from drugs. She said it is time to quit. I ran the book off on the computer. I told her that her story was at the end of the book. I told her that it had an unhappy ending. I hoped she would make it a happy ending. She went to detox. She got out of detox and said she read it. She wanted it to have a happy ending. The day after Mother's Day she was supposed to go into the thirty-day program.

I haven't heard from her in five days. I hope she is in rehab.

# Short Stories, Essays, and Words of Wisdom from the Crazy Old White Man

Some of the following stories and essays will repeat certain things that were in the main story. I feel that these summaries are needed to reinforce the points I am trying to bring out.

# Helping Lost Souls

Those who have read my earlier works know that I am writing my book with the proceeds going to helping lost and forgotten souls find themselves and remind the world that they are alive and will with help be well.

The first stage will be the Castle of Hope Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Center.

This would be a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center with a different approach. AA and NA have a negative approach. Their contention is that once an addict, always an addict. You are always one rock, snort, injection, or drink from going back to the addiction once you stop.

For many, this is true. The addiction to them is a disease. Their willpower is weak. These people probably need AA or NA. If they were in my program to begin with, they would be referred to AA or NA upon completion of the rehab program.

The others can, with an attitude readjustment, rid themselves of the urge to get high or drunk. I was a drunk. I stopped getting drunk for a few years but still drank socially. I controlled my drinking. I chose to get drunk again for a couple of years then quit drinking almost completely. In ten years I have had two glasses of cold duck and two baby bottles of beer (a nipple sucking contest).

I would use group and individual sessions with the clients and reformed addicts to adjust the clients' attitudes. They would be convinced that they do not need drugs and alcohol to enjoy life. They will find that the best and only acceptable drug is the enjoyment of

life. In order to quit, the addict needs to want to quit. They are the only ones that can make the decision to quit.

What we have to do is to help them make that decision. We have to show them that there is another way to be happy without being high on drugs. We have to show them how they can cope with life without dropping out of life.

I will need a staff of workers and professionals that are willing to volunteer their time or work for pay based on our ability to pay. They would have to be single and in most cases live at the center. They would be on 24-hour call. Room and board would be a part of their pay.

Another important feature would be to help the recovering addict find a job and a home. If they have no place to go, they will be able to go to the homeless center.

The second stage will be the Castle of Hope Battered Mothers and Children Service Center.

This would be a place for the spouses and children who are battered. It would be a place they can come for counseling or a place to hide from the batterer. If a child were battered, a court order would be requested for the child to stay at the service center.

There would also be therapy for the batterer. Here we would enlist volunteer help and guest experts. We would work with the jails and prisons to show the batterer what can happen to them.

We will also show them what can happen to those that they batter.

The third stage will be the Castle of Hope Homeless Service Center.

This is where many of the lost and forgotten souls will start. Those who are drug addicts and alcoholics will be able to go to the rehab center if they wish. Here they will be approached to see it they want to talk to the people at rehab, and if they wish they could have someone talk to them about quitting.

For those who are not addicts, we will help them find work. If for some reason they cannot work, if possible, we will help them become able to work. If there is no way for them to make a living, we will help them find aid.

I also want to have the Castle of Hope for Lost and Forgotten Souls.

This would be the parent of the first three and would be like a church for people from all religions and for non-religious people as well. It would have services aimed at helping people find themselves. This is not only the homeless and the addicts.

Many people are lost souls. They can be rich or they can be poor. One problem with being rich is that you become suspect of people's motives when they become friendly with you. It can become a lonely life. This would be a place for rich and poor to come together and learn from each other. The same would be for people of all religions and non-religious people.

The main goal would be to bring people from all backgrounds together to help themselves and others. Individuals would not be asked for contributions, but there would be pre-addressed envelopes for sending contributions at the exits and entrances.

The services would have speakers who would speak about love and helping others. There would be a choir singing songs of love and helping others. The speakers may be religious and lay people. No religion would be promoted but religious ideals that are universal would be talked about. For those who want to learn about other religions, there would be reading material and people to contact. People would also be able to learn about different ethnic backgrounds.

The idea would be to help people understand differences so they would not be afraid of those differences. This would be a way to cut down prejudice, which is normally caused by a fear of those who are different. If we understand the differences, we will not fear them and, therefore, we will lose our prejudices. Those are the things we will be happy about losing.

Some of you who read this will think that the chances for my success are slim to none. It is all dependent on the success of the book. I will start the Castle of Hope foundation, which will own all of the rights to the book. I will be given a place to live, food, clothing, and some change to have fun with.

Once the book comes out, I will need your help. If you are reading this, you probably bought the book, so tell your friends about it. If you know Oprah, get me on her show. I need more readers who support what I want to do.

## The Drug and Alcohol Problem

Over the past few years, except for four or five joints, I have not done illegal drugs.

At one time I was a drunk. I am now a reformed drunk. I was not an alcoholic because I totally stopped drinking on my own ten years ago. In the last ten years I have had two glasses of cold duck and two beers. I have tended bar and lived in bars and did not even want anything stronger than cola. I also use nicotine and caffeine.

I have never used cocaine, heroin, or any of the other illegal drugs except for "bud."

As I mentioned above, my life has been affected by it. I have lost friends to drugs and I have lost women I have cared for to crack and alcohol.

My second wife and I took my children from the first marriage to the ethnic festivals on the Detroit River quite often when they were kids. One time there was a man in his early thirties eating out of garbage cans. A couple with no sense or compassion teased him with a cup of beer. They would act like they were giving it to him then take it away. They then threw it in the garbage and he dove into it to try to get the beer before it all came out of the cup.

My son asked me why he was that way. I said drugs and alcohol have fried his brains.

Another time we met a friend of the wife's family. His hands were swollen grotesquely and one of the kids asked why. I told them he was a heroin addict and he shoots up in his hands. The last time I saw him he had recovered from his addiction and was living happily. He

was jogging and he and his wife were going back together. He had two heart attacks and soon after I saw him he died of a heart attack. Heroin killed him.

A few years ago, after my divorce, I met a young lady who was a joy to be with. Then I found she was cross-addicted with drugs and alcohol. When she was sober and not high, we had a great time together. When I got money in, she would disappear and the drug dealers would start calling. The first had her pager and would give it back to me for what she owed him. The second would have a ring or two. When she ran out of things to trade, she would be back.

She finally went into detox for a week. She came out and was waiting for a thirty-day program. She went a month drug and alcohol free. We were going to take a long weekend off and I had seven hundred dollars together for the trip. She helped me with my accounting business, and the night before the trip, she decided to spend the night at my place above the office. She told me to go to bed and she would come up later after finishing some work.

In the morning I found my wallet on my desk with a note asking for forgiveness and it was missing three hundred fifty dollars. The next day the dealers started calling and by the end of the day the money was gone and a dealer was holding her until I came up with the money she owed him.

When she came back she asked me to lock her in the office for a week and she would have the same diet that she had in detox. After the week she was straight for a week. Locked up for a week. Then she ended up leaving me for a dealer.

She now has a beautiful little girl (not mine); she is doing well. I saw her a while ago and she seems to be clean and sober.

She came in the bar while I was shooting pool. I was winning until she walked in and I lost my concentration on the game. She was slender with extensions. Her skin was a beautiful medium brown. I knew that we would be together within a week.

She came to the jukebox and looked for the quarter slot. It only took dollar bills. I put a dollar in and said to her, "If I had the money, I would take you out on the town, but I don't so I won't." I went back to my game and lost.

She was sitting at the bar with a beer. I had enough to buy a beer so I went up to her and bought her one and ordered glass of water for

myself. She said, "A guy is supposed to pick me up. It's a blind date. Why don't you give me your phone number in case it doesn't work out?" I went home.

Five minutes after I got home she called and said she had corned beef and cabbage for me and asked how long it would take to get there. I said fifteen minutes, and she asked why because I was only about four blocks away. I said I had to shave. She said in five minutes I would not be let in. I was there in three.

In three days I had a fire at my office. My office wasn't damaged by fire; it stayed in the business in the front of the building, but the smoke smell was bad so she asked me to stay with her for three days. It lasted six months.

The rent, utilities, and food were covered by her welfare. I ended up paying for her crack and forty ouncers. Before I knew it I was buying her drugs. The dealers would stop me on the street when they got new houses and take me to introduce me to their sales people. (Being an older white man, I had to get an intro because they would think I was NARCO.)

If I got caught I would go to jail for sale of crack. I didn't use it, so I had to be buying for sale. She gave me a place to stay and sex, and in return (according to the law) I gave her the crack. I lived with her five times. Each time was better but she could not shake it. The last time I thought it would work.

She got pregnant. She had a miscarriage in the second month. She blamed me.

She was still drinking and using crack on weekends when she would go to Detroit. (We were living north of Detroit.) There were complications and they did ultrasounds weekly. The baby was living one week and the next we went in for an ultrasound, the baby was gone. The doctor said that it was at the stage where when it died it disintegrated in the sack. (I know this is sickening but I feel that it has to be known.) After we split up for the last time, my doctor told me that the crack and alcohol caused the death.

It takes five years after a woman stops using cocaine for the system to clear and for it to be safe to have a baby.

Almost a month after her fortieth birthday, she had a stroke. As of this writing we are good friends and she is recovering from a second stroke. She knows she can no longer use drugs or alcohol. I think the stroke saved her life.

In between times with the last one, I was seeing another young lady. She did not drink and that made me happy. I soon found out that the money she made was gone too fast and the money I made was going to pay her bills. She was on crack. Until I became homeless, I was paying her bills.

Good ending to this one. She has been drug free for three years and will stay that way. She did it on her own and it is something she is and should be proud of. She is working hard and long hours to get a place for her and her daughter. I still have strong feelings for all three of them.

As I said before I have seen a lot of drug use and I have seen many lives ruined. I have had friends die because of drugs. The strange thing is that in the first two cases the dealers asked if they could help me in getting the girlfriend off the drugs. They offered not to sell to them but I said I would rather have them buy from them than someone that may harm them.

I feel that the penalty should be life for selling drugs to minors. When adults buy the drugs, it is on them, not the dealer. The users have the choice when they start. They know the danger and if anyone says they don't, that is bull.

The feds help them pay for their drugs with SSI. If they used, they were crazy and could not work, so SSI paid them. I think one idea was that if they got the money they would lead to less crime to get the money for drugs. I say that gave them more drugs because the next day it was gone and they were out trying to get more drug money to feed their habit.

What can we do? It takes people with experience with drugs to help keep others from making the mistakes they made. I had a client who worked for GM's drug program. He was a heroin addict. He was white but he was raised in the black hood. If you did not see him but heard him talk, you would swear he was black. One morning he woke up with his gun in his bed. A bullet was fired and he didn't know where. For all he knew he may have killed someone. To this day when the doorbell rings, he worries it may be the cops to get him for murder.

Someday I want to open a rehab center for drugs and alcohol. The building I want is going to be destroyed for the stadium and/or casino projects. It is on a pie-shaped lot and looks like a castle. I wanted to

call it the castle of hope. A man I knew, who looked like Santa and many thought he was Santa because of the miracles he performed, knew people who could help and he said he would help. I knew a preacher, who was in love with the mother who with her two kids stayed with me (see my other sites for their story), was going to help. When she and the kids disappeared (drug related) he could no longer help.

If you are in love with a person who is an addict, I feel for you. I am in love with one now. I think she is kicking the habit but it takes time. There are times when tough love is the way to go. There are times when you have to cut them loose. DO NOT LET THEM DRAG YOU DOWN! They have to decide when to quit. If they are not ready, no rehab in the world can help. The only way you can help them is to convince them to help themselves.

I have had a lot of friends who were addicted to drugs and/or alcohol. Some quit on their own and some quit with the help of NA and/or AA.

Until recently it was thought to be a poor black problem. It is not and was not a black problem. It is a human problem that affects all races, nationalities, and ethnic backgrounds.

It is in the schools in the city, in the suburbs, and in the country. All of us know people who have been hurt or killed by them. When I was in high school I lost six friends because of drunk driving. I have lost many friends in the last twenty years to drug addiction.

As time goes by the drugs get worse. Heroin is back and it is worse than it ever was. We now have the date-rape drug.

# Women and Drugs

If you read my previous articles, you will notice that I not only like women, but I usually end up with women who are addicted to drugs. It seems like I find a woman that is attractive and intelligent that also has a drug problem. I try to show them what they are doing to themselves and those who love them. They have the potential to find a good job. Some of them had a good job before they became addicts. They went from good lives to the streets because of their addictions. The sad thing is that they not only hurt themselves but they also hurt their children.

I have seen children walking around with contact highs from smelling the secondhand smoke from crack. I have seen hyperactive children who are very intelligent but cannot sit still and listen in class. I have seen intelligent kids drop out of school after giving up on their parents. ("Why should I get good grades when my mother is too high to notice?") I have seen teenagers become drug dealers and their mother becomes their best customer. I have seen these drug-dealing kids get shot in drive-by shootings.

I have to give some of these mothers credit for not putting their children through it. They are the ones who love their children enough to let them go with a family member or give them up for adoption. They give their children the gift of life and a chance at a good life without drugs.

The only way a drug addict can kick the addiction is for them to realize that it is doing them more harm than good. They have to realize the only way to change their future from bad to good is to kick the addiction. They have to want to stop.

One day the elevator was stuck on the eighth floor. Sometimes when you got off at the eighth floor the only way it was going to move was for the person getting out on that floor to hit the first floor button. The security guard went to the eighth floor, opened the door, and Mandy was standing there in a trance with her finger just touching the button but not enough to make it move.

She had been in that position for at least ten minutes.

She knows that she no longer gets a high from crack. It puts her in a trance. She will just sit or stand in one spot without moving for many minutes or even an hour. Sometimes while in the trance she will go and knock on doors at two or three in the morning. Other times she may come to me with paranoid delusions. That time is lost forever; she never remembers what happened. She is now banned from every apartment building in the area.

If you want to help, give to the Salvation Army. They will take addicts in for no charge. There are hospitals that have rehabilitation, but they normally require insurance coverage or money.

When I sat down to write this, it was going to be women and how to treat them right. I guess I was thinking about Mandy.

# The Street People of the City

The Cass Corridor of Detroit is like the skid row. Cheap hotels, drug rehab center, the homeless, and residents of the cheap hotels. You will find alcoholics, drug addicts, prostitutes, mentally ill people, and people down on their luck. Some are Vietnam veterans who cannot make it in society because of the war wounds, post-traumatic stress syndrome or drug and alcohol problems acquired during the war. Some lost their jobs and families because of their addictions. Some were put out from the mental health facilities because they were not "a threat to themselves or society." The problem is that many cannot cope with society or hold down jobs because their minds are not functioning properly.

They survive with odd jobs, begging, returning pop bottles for deposits, looking in garbage cans, prostitution, and stealing. Life in the streets is survival of the fit. (Not the fittest, but the fit.) The old and weak are subject to being robbed. The sad part is that they don't have anything to steal.

There is a good side. The people are real people. They are not phonies unless they are conning someone. Most do not sit there and cry about their situation but go out and do what they can to survive.

Most of the drug addicts cannot be trusted but many have a good heart. I will not sit here and tell you that they are the way they are because of our society. They are the way they are because their parents were that way, they got in with the wrong crowd, or because they like getting high. Crack is the worst drug around. It is the most addictive drug out there. Crack ruins more lives and kills more people than any other drug.

There are many sad stories about how they got there. There are many sad stories about what happens to them there. People found dead in alleys, dumpsters, vacant buildings, and lots. People are found frozen, shot, stabbed, beaten, or those who overdosed on drugs. Some get AIDS from sharing syringes when they shoot up.

I met many people that I enjoyed being with. Some of the best friends I have had were street people.

My first experience with the streets was in 1963 when I was in the Navy. I was in school at the Great Lakes Naval Base outside of Chicago. On weekends I would go to Chicago and stay in the Y or the Pacific Garden Mission. I spent most of my time in the arcade (on the pool tables) and in the streets. I hustled pool with a friend who had a good stick. I was not too good.

When he was in the Army he was a martial arts instructor. He was jumped by three guys and they died in the fight. He got three years in Fort Leavenworth for manslaughter. He had a wife and three kids. He was an ex-con and had a dishonorable discharge, so he had a hard time getting a job. All of the money we won went to him and his family.

I met a pregnant prostitute and we helped her out. We bought her shoes and some clothing. Part of my pay went to helping her out. I went to a ship at Key West, Florida, before the baby was born. I got a letter from her after the baby was born and she said she named the baby after both of us.

Before I go on I have this word of warning to prospective johns. If you pick up a street hooker, the odds are that you will get robbed and possibly killed or seriously injured. The street hooker is always in danger of being picked up by a rapist or killer. Street prostitution makes it hard on the women who are not prostitutes. If they are in a neighborhood that is known to have prostitution, they are propositioned by johns. Street prostitution should never be legalized and efforts by the police to stamp it out should be increased, especially in the neighborhoods.

I have known a lot of street hookers. Most were addicted to crack or heroin. Many were cross-addicted with alcohol. Now we are in the mid to late 1990s Detroit and Inkster, Michigan, streets. Many of these young women were clean and very careful not to get venereal diseases or AIDS. They made sure the johns used condoms and they supplied them to the johns.

Many of these women were my friends. If they needed someone to talk to I was there. I was not a john. I was a person whom people could go to with their problems. I did not have money for them. I had an ear, advice, a shoulder, and I was someone who cared. Some even referred to me as their shrink. If they wanted help to get off of drugs, I was there as a voice of reason. Being a reformed drunk helped. I also had a lot of experience with drug addiction. (With the exception of a few joints, I did not use drugs.)

Johns would come to me and ask me about a hooker and I would say that I had no experience with them sexually but do not go to sleep. The next day they would tell me that their money or something was taken. I asked if they went to sleep and they did. I told them they were warned and the girl was just doing her job.

One of them took off with one hundred fifty thousand dollars that a john had in a briefcase. She had to get out of town fast but had the money for a getaway. Last I heard she wasn't caught.

While I was waiting for a bus, a man told me that he won seven thousand dollars at the casino in Windsor. Why was he waiting for a bus? He picked up a lady and went to the hotel. He woke up and his money was gone. He reached for his cell phone and it was gone. He went in his pants pocket and his car keys were gone. His wife bought him the car two weeks before. No insurance. My thought was DON'T GO TO SLEEP.

I knew addicts (male and female), dealers, drunks, mentally ill, and those down on their luck. They did what they could to survive and, in the case of the addicts and alcoholics, to keep their addictions satisfied. Many were homeless, others lived in cheap hotels in the Cass Corridor. Early in the morning some would meet at a restaurant to pass out handbills. A guy would pick them up with a truck and take them to the neighborhoods. Others would do odd jobs for the businesses in the area. Some would beg and some would pick the garbage for food and bottles for the deposits. Some would steal and others were hookers.

I spent a week in Wayne County Jail. While waiting for my bail hearing, I met thirty to forty inmates. Waiting for a cell, I met thirty to forty more. I was in two cells while I was there and met ten more in each cell. So I met eighty to one hundred inmates. The ones that did not make bail all had one thing in common. They were poor. If they

were not poor, most would have made bail. If they were not poor, most would not have done anything to be there.

I am not going to blame society. Many could not get jobs because they lacked education. Some high school graduates can't read. Some never finished school because they did not have the support of their parents. For some, the only way to survive or take care of their families was selling drugs, conning people, or stealing.

The official unemployment rate is low. That includes only those who lost their jobs and are looking for work. The street people are not included. They are among those people who are considered to be "unemployable." They are not even statistics. They are the forgotten people. They are swept under the rug.

But, alas, what can be done? More rehab centers? Might help, but they have to want rehab. Some need to be in institutions. I see missionaries in the neighborhoods but I did not see them in the corridor. The Salvation Army is there and there are soup kitchens and some shelters.

### The Homeless

I have lived in many parts of Detroit. I too was one of the homeless for three months. I also lived in a hotel in a part of Detroit (the Cass Corridor) where most of the homeless exist. This area is now an economic development area. Soon the homeless will be moved as new business moves in.

Detroit is becoming a beautiful city (downtown mainly). With the casino business and the new hotels and business brought in by them, we are going to see revitalization of the downtown.

What happens to the homeless? Who cares? The answer to the first is that they are pushed into the neighborhoods. The answer to the second question is the people in those neighborhoods will care.

Most of the homeless are in their position for reasons beyond their control.

Some lost their jobs and were too old or not qualified to find another. Many of these have turned to cheap alcohol to make their lives easier to deal with.

Many are Vietnam veterans that our country has abandoned. They went to fight for our country (they thought) and were exposed to cheap drugs, a new type of warfare, mental problems caused by the war, physical problems caused by the war, missing or useless limbs due to wounds, flashbacks, and other problems caused by an unpopular war.

The Vietnam War was a war where many survived due to the modern lifesaving techniques used in the war. Many came home unable to walk and other disabilities that made it hard for them to get

jobs. I have met many victims of the war that are homeless. I volunteered to go when I was in the Navy in 1964 but I failed the physical. If I went, I may have ended up on a gunboat in the Mekong Delta and later on the streets of Detroit.

Many of the homeless have a problem with drugs or alcohol. One night the twin brother of a girlfriend, who was an addict and homeless, came to my hotel and said his sister relapsed and was with a dealer. After midnight he and I were going through the most dangerous area of Detroit. Everywhere you look you see addicts smoking crack. You pass by bushes and see the fire from the pipes and lighters.

We would stop and he would ask other addicts if they saw his sister and many said yes and where. We got back to the hotel empty handed. Soon he came back and said he found her and needed money. I gave him my money and a wedding ring that was going to be used when his sister and I get married (we did not). He did not come back. The whole thing was a set up. He went to great lengths to get the money. He had friends helping by saying they saw her. She was at home all the time. You will meet her in my drug and alcohol page.

What do we do for these people? There are programs to help rehabilitate them. Our government pays some SSI. They use it to buy their drugs. Sometimes I think it is hopeless. No one cares. They are addicts by choice. They can stop when they want to. These people do not really know.

I am a reformed drunk. I quit drinking because I no longer wanted to drink. I quit on my own. Many need help. Before they can be helped, they have to want help. Usually it is too late when they want it.

Many of these people have mental illnesses. They are put out of the mental health hospitals because they are "not a threat to themselves or society." This is true with most as long as they take their medication, but most do not. Many cannot find a job because they cannot communicate well enough.

We also see young runaways. There have been many television shows on this subject. Too young to find work or afraid of being sent home if they get a job. There are a lot of twisted johns out there looking for young boys and/or girls for their sexual satisfaction. (Here

is a good place for the death penalty. Pedophiles do not deserve to live.)

How do the homeless survive? Some beg, others do odd jobs, others resort to prostitution, and some steal. The people that distribute handbills from door to door are homeless. Some live in abandoned buildings. Some live in cheap hotels. There are shelters but not enough. It is said that unemployment is low but they are the uncounted unemployed. They eat at shelters, soup kitchens, out of garbage cans.

Alcohol and/or drugs are a part of the life of most. They use most of the money they get for their habit.

What can we do to help? Many say, "They can help themselves. They can get a job." Some can and many can't.

We need more shelters, halfway houses, rehab centers, and low-cost homes. There are a lot of abandoned hotels in Detroit that could be converted to places for the homeless. Now with the casinos they will either be torn down and replaced with new hotels or rebuilt. The rich will benefit from them. There are also a lot of abandoned homes in Detroit that can be rebuilt and used for them.

Short story—Place: Cass Corridor, Detroit, Michigan. Time: eleven in the evening. I was fifty years old, gray hair, six feet, one inches tall, and weighed two hundred and seventy-five pounds. I had on an old topcoat, holey sneakers, and a two-day-old beard. It was a freezing rain. Two guys twice my size came up to me and asked for a square (cigarette).

The biggest got behind me and picked me up. He said, "This is a hold up." I busted out laughing and asked him not to take the girlfriend and her daughter's pictures. After they got the money the guy said, "Is five dollars all you have?"

I looked at him and said, "What the hell do you expect from an old white man in the Cass Corridor? Why don't you go where people have money instead of robbing the poor, homeless, and crack addicts?"

This, my friends, is life in the Cass Corridor.

### The Kids in the Streets

Drugs are a fact of the streets. If you get the addict off the streets, will they stop? No, they will find drugs. They are in the streets for many reasons. Some because of drugs and some because they are runaways that become prostitutes to survive, then start using drugs that are all around them.

Today, the Detroit PD had a drug bust five blocks from my apartment. If I knew about it, I could have watched it from my window. Where I am, it is safe. Four blocks away is the Cass Corridor.

One of the best high schools in the city and possibly the country is there. The kids are all college bound and have high grades. They waited at a bus stop while the junkies begged in the streets, bought, and used their drugs. They watched the prostitutes get picked up by their johns.

The main drug house was closed down and tonight the drugs may not be on the corner, but tomorrow they will probably be back.

The city is full of abandoned and burned-out houses, apartment buildings, and businesses. Many are boarded up, some are not. Some are homes for packs of dogs and cats. Some are homes for the homeless. Some use them to do their drugs. Rapists use them to drag their victims in and rape them.

Some of these are near schools, and as the children are walking by, they fear that they may be the next victim. Bodies are found in them.

A lady was at a bus stop with her baby. She realized that she forgot her purse and left her baby with a strange man and ran home to get her purse. She came back and the man and the baby were gone. A few days later the baby was found in an abandoned house. The man had a mental problem and did not know what to do with the baby. He just walked away.

The city is slowly tearing down these buildings. The ones near the schools take priority. They tore one apartment building down that was next to a school, just before school was to start. Asbestos ended up in the school from the building. It took a few weeks to clean it up.

The abandoned buildings that are not in bad shape many times become drug houses. Drug addicts will rob people and go to the drug house for their drugs. Women will try to trade the bodies for drugs.

For those of you who think marijuana is safe, let me tell you about a 16-year-old boy who used it. He was a straight-A student. He got a bad batch and started having blackouts and psychotic episodes. The police saved him from being run over by a freight train. He was stopped from jumping off a bridge. His grades dropped to Ds and Fs.

He was 17 and working for a drug dealer. He was in the bathroom and a girl came in. The dealer refused to give her drugs for sex so she was going try to get them from the young man. She tried to pull his pants down and he shot her. He is probably in the state hospital for the criminally insane. Yes, marijuana is harmless. So are guns.

The lowest scum of the earth are those who molest children. Those that sell drugs to children and turn young runaways into prostitutes.

There was this man who was in his mid fifties and worked for one of the automakers. He was also white. He approached Nancy and wanted her to recruit young girls. She was fourteen and did not have sex or let him take pictures of her. When he was caught he had one hundred and fifty nude pictures with some performing sex acts on him of young teenage black girls. He was out of jail in a year and a half. If he is caught in the neighborhood by the parents, he will die.

I hope that our new mayor can speed up the demolition of the abandoned buildings. The Cass Corridor will be rebuilding, so that will help solve the problem in that part of the city. We have thousands of abandoned buildings and more are being added. Hopefully the tide will turn soon.

# A Day in the Life of a Homeless Person

I am going to tell you about a day in the life of Joe Wino. Joe is homeless and a drunk. At one time he was a successful businessman. He lost his family in an auto accident. After the accident he could not function. He started to drink to make the pain of his loss go away. He soon could not function at work and got fired. Then he lost his house and found himself in the streets.

During the warm parts of the year he sleeps on park benches, in alleys, in abandoned buildings, bus stop shelters, or anywhere else he can lie down and go to sleep. During the winter, if the shelters are full, he tries to find something inside. It may not be heated; he has some blankets to help keep the cold out of his body.

All of his belongings are in a plastic bag. In the morning he gets up and heads for the garbage cans and dumpsters. He looks for bottles that he can turn in for the deposit money, food, or something to drink. He likes the dumpsters behind the restaurants because they sometimes have food, especially after meal times. If he is lucky he will not have to spend money on food. That gives him more for his liquid refreshment.

Joe is at the bus stop, and when the bus stops, he gets on and asks if anyone can help him with bus fare. If there is a sucker he gets the fare and jumps off. He can't do this too often because each driver remembers him and will eventually stop picking him up. When he gets enough for a cheap half pint he goes to the liquor store and buys the cheapest half pint he can find.

Sometimes someone will take him to get food. Then he sells it for more cheep booze. Many of those on the streets are drug addicts too. Some have lost a limb or two because of their addiction. You see them on crutches, in wheelchairs or hopping around on one leg. During the day they are downtown begging from the office workers and shoppers. If they aren't causing problems, the police look the other way.

Joe's day is spent walking, begging, checking garbage, and having an occasional nap. As night falls, he starts to think about where he will sleep. He finds a place in an abandoned building. He has a bottle that he will drink until he passes out. If he is lucky, he will wake up in the morning. Maybe if he is lucky, he will not wake up in the morning. If it's cold, he may freeze to death. He may be killed by another homeless person or some sick killer. He may die from the cheap booze.

How lucky he is depends on his living or if his death is painless. No one will miss him. No one will care. He is a lost and forgotten soul. Maybe if he is gone, someone may wonder what happened to that bum that used to beg here. Maybe one person will miss him. I may miss him.

When we go, if one person realizes we are gone, then we were not totally lost.

# What Can We Do About the Drug Problem?

Good question. I wish I had a good answer. The government can't get the drugs off the street. Every time they make a bust the people are back on the street or someone else is there in their place. We have to fight the addiction.

For this article, addiction will be to drugs and alcohol.

What I am going to say is all based on what I have experienced over the years. I have no formal education. I was not an addict, but I was a drunk and woke up one day with a new life and quit getting drunk. I haven't had a drink in ten years because I don't want to drink.

We have to start with the children. My kids from my first marriage saw first hand what drugs can do. They said no every time.

I have seen children walking around with a contact high from crack. For them the contact high is like what the adult gets smoking it. What can we do for the children of the addicts? How do we keep them from following in their parents' footsteps?

We have to do what is best for the children. As long as the parents are addicted, the children are in danger. That is child abuse. Children of addicts are beaten, sold, left at home alone, and in some cases abandoned.

We have to save the children. We have to remove the children from the home until the parents get their act together. If the parents are not together and one parent is clean and sober, that parent should be given custody of the children. If the other parent cannot or will not take the children, try to find a relative. If no relative comes forward then the only thing left is to find a foster family to take the children until the parent is clean and sober.

Once the parent regains custody, they should have random drug tests for at least a year.

The schools should have continuing drug education programs starting in elementary school and continuing through college. There should also be evening classes for parents to help them deal with the problem.

What do we do about the addict? Based on my experience, the addict has to want to quit. No program will be able to get them to stop unless they want to stop. Most of the people I know on drugs who have gone to rehab went back to drugs within a month. They go back to the old neighborhood and so-called friends who drag them back into addiction.

NA and AA tell you that once an addict, always an addict. This gives many a defeatist attitude. Why should I quit when I will never be free of the problem? Why should I go through life worrying every day about having a drink?

I changed my attitude and I have not had a drink in ten years. I go to bars. I tended bar. I have no urge to drink. Nothing makes me want a drink. I get high on life.

For some people AA and NA work. Some people may have an illness that causes them to lose control. I feel that in most cases you need an attitude adjustment. Hypnosis may work for some.

First of all, the addict has to want to quit. If they don't want to quit, they will not. Even hypnosis will not work if they do not want to quit.

Why do they have the problem in the first place? What made them start using?

In most cases they have low self-esteem. They feel unwanted and unloved.

You have to find the root of the problem and try to ease the damage done by the problem. If it was a death in the family or another loved one, you have to help them deal with it. Convince them that the person would not want them to be addicts. Convince them that the person is watching over them.

You have to build their self-esteem. Convince them that they can do anything they set their mind to and that they can quit.

You have to make them understand that drugs cannot cure any problems but will only make them worse. I do not let anything bother me anymore. If lose a woman, no matter how much I cared for her, I am not going to go to the bottle. Life goes on and it may get better with her gone.

Show them what drugs can do, the homeless who can't find a job because of their addictions, people missing arms and legs because of drugs, women who are 30 and look 60, people who had strokes because of drugs, people whose hearts exploded because of drugs, and people who fried their brains with drugs and go around on the streets talking to themselves.

You have to convince them to care enough about themselves to want to stop before it happens to them. You have to show them love and give them reasons to love themselves enough to save themselves from themselves.

They are lost souls and you have to help them find themselves. Their whole attitude about life, themselves, their loved ones, and their so-called friends has to be changed.

This is not an overnight process; before rehab, it may take a year or more for them to even go to rehab. Once in rehab, it may take one to six months in house and one to six months out of house. Then you need to give them a twenty-four/seven support line for when they need help.

You cannot tell them that they are doomed to a life of addiction. You cannot tell them that only God can save them. God gave us the power to reason. He gave us the power to help ourselves and he gave others the power to help us help ourselves.

The key is that the person has to fight addiction from within. The only one that can win the war against addiction is the addicted one. They may need help, but in the end they have to save their own asses.

As I said I have no formal training on this subject. I did not go to school for this. I learned at the best place to learn about the problem and the cure. I learned from the streets.

All of the high-priced studies, all of the books, all of the classes, and all of the highly educated doctors cannot save the addict. You have to learn from the biggest school. You have to learn from the streets.

Yes, you need the doctors to help during the cold turkey part of the process. The rest of it takes those who have been there, former drunks and drug addicts. After rehab they need support. They need someone they can talk to when they are down. Someone they can get a hold of twenty-four hours a day.

NA and AA will say I am full of shit. You may say that I am full of shit. I know a lot of addicts. Some never went to rehab and are now off drugs and alcohol; they changed their attitude. I changed my attitude and quit using alcohol.

NA and AA have helped many. I say that an attitude readjustment program will save the souls that they cannot save. They treat an illness. This program would treat the soul.

# Why I Want to Help Lost Souls

I believe in God and Christ. I was raised Episcopal and was going to be a minister. I became disillusioned with the church because of hypocrisy.

I think of the Bible as a history book written by men coloring the story to benefit them. Like all history books, it has true and stories based on fact.

I worship by myself. I have been asked to become a preacher. If I do it will be non-denominational. I would preach a way of life based on the Ten Commandments. I would not preach Christianity itself.

I would preach for the lost souls of this world. I would not try to convert people to my way. I would want them to stay with their religion and use this as an addition to their lives.

I do not need the material things of life. I am happy with what I have.

I noticed in many churches the poor seem to give more than the others. I would look for money from the others and help the poor. If you are poor and want to help, give time, not money.

I have had some successful authors tell me that I have a winner with the book I am writing. I have also had people tell me that I will succeed in my rehab plans.

Many of you may think I am full of shit. Some of you may think it will work.

Every time I would go up financially, something would knock me down. The first time was alcohol, the second time was bigotry and the

third time was the boss's divorce. After the third time, I decided God wants me to help the lost souls.

I was spared in two auto accidents in which everyone said I should be dead. In one, the only undamaged part of the car was the seat I was in. My glasses were outside of the car.

# I Am Me or What You See Is What You Get

I am not a conformist. I am me and the only me. Look far and wide and you will never find another me. I am a black man trapped in a white man's body. I am not the only one that says that. Two astrologers, a sheriff's deputy who decided what cell I would visit, many of my friends, and many people I have met have said it when they first met me.

If I was not myself I would be a partner in a CPA firm, making two hundred fifty thousand dollars a year. I would be married to a white woman (no offense—her race is relevant to the book), I would have two grown-up kids, and I would be living in a posh home in the wealthy Detroit suburbs and unhappy.

Now I am single, financially poor, living in a small apartment downtown, self-employed, have a lot of friends, and when it comes to life I am rich.

Except for arthritis, high blood pressure, a stroke a few years ago, falling asleep when I drive (I don't drive anymore), and cancer on my ear, I have my health.

I love life, I get high on life instead of drugs and alcohol, and I never have a bad day.

I believe that we are all equal, yet we are all different. I am not better than anyone and no one is better than me.

I am a reformed drunk, not a recovering alcoholic. I quit because I wanted to. I do not avoid alcohol, I just don't drink it. I quit with an attitude self-adjustment. I can tend bar and never think about drinking again. I have been sober for ten years.

I help people help themselves. You cannot beat a habit or an addiction unless you want to.

Always remember that you are what you make yourself to be. You have to have faith in yourself in order to get ahead. You have to have faith in yourself to fight life-threatening illnesses.

Don't go overboard and let that faith become pride. Don't decide that you are better than everyone else. Someday you will find out that you are wrong.

We are all individuals with strong points and weaknesses. You are better in some things than I am, but I am better in some things than you are.

When you see the beggars on the street, do not look down on them. (Someday you may be there.) You don't have to give them money, and if you ask if they want you to give them food and they say yes, buy them something to eat. The odds are they will say no. Give to places like the Salvation Army and homeless shelters. You may save a life.

Love life, love God, love your fellow man (this includes women), love your family, and love yourself. Then will you be loved.

### Are You You?

Do you ever stop and take a close look at yourself? Do you ever say to yourself, "Is that me?" "Am I really like that?" "Do people like me?" and, "Do I really care?"

I am me, and if you don't like it, that is just tough. Are you you? Do you care what others think? Should you care or feel as I do and don't care? Before answering, look at yourself and ask if you like yourself. Are you an asshole? Do people dislike you because you are mean and angry at the world? Maybe you should give yourself a mental makeover before answering. Maybe you are an asshole. Maybe you are a nice guy inside but an asshole outside. You may not like yourself.

I don't care what you think of me, but I do care about you. You may be an asshole, but you are a human and there is some hope that you will realize you are an asshole and change.

Do you look down on people and walk down the street with your nose in the air? Do you only care about yourself? Maybe you should say I am me and I need an attitude readjustment.

Are you a boss? Do those under you smile in your face but give you the almighty finger when your back is turned to them? Do you think that you are not supposed to be their friend, you are the boss? Why should you make them hate you? Would they not work harder for you if they liked you? Aren't there ways to help them do their job right and be nice about it?

When I say, "I am me and I do not care what you think," it is because I am a nice guy; I care about people and try to help those in

need. If you do not like me, I probably do not like you and therefore I don't care.

Are you a good-looking dude and stuck on yourself? Do you think that you are God's greatest gift to women? Did you know that you are an asshole and down the road someone you love deeply will drop you and hurt you deeply and I will say "It serves you right"?

Some say pride is a sin. It's not pride, but it's being an asshole that is a sin. Be proud of your achievements and be proud of yourself. Don't be self-centered and don't think others are below you.

I realize that most of my readers are nice people. From the comments of those who have posted them, I feel you are good people. Some of you may be a little strange and some may be a little dysfunctional. (Why is that a "y" and not the letter "i"?) But you are all good people. If you know an asshole, don't hate them. Help them realize the error in their ways and maybe they will change.

Then maybe Hell will freeze tomorrow.

### Assholes Never Die

Did you ever walk down the street and see someone you want to hit in the mouth?

I like to think of myself as a nice guy. The other day I saw myself in the mirror and said, "Self, you are a nice guy." Self is always right, so I must be a nice guy.

But, and that's a big but, every once in a while I run into some clown that has a "holier than thou" attitude. They do not have to say anything. You just look at them and all you see is the "I'm better than you and everyone else" look.

They do not look you in the eye. They look for something wrong with your appearance. They find it and tell you with their eyes that you have the taste of a peon. You look at them with the "I want to pee on you" look. You really want to bust them in the mouth. You may even think about kicking them in the balls.

I went to lunch with a client. His sales manager talked the whole meal about class. Who has class and who doesn't have class? I said, "He who always talks about class has none." The client almost fell off his chair laughing. The sales manager got all red and never said another word to me; in fact he would not even look at me. That was better than hitting him in the face.

### Changes

We change as we go through life. Hopefully we learn from our mistakes.

I am not the same young man that I was when I married my first wife. I am not the same man that I was when I married my second wife. I am not the same man I was when I got my second divorce.

On January 1, 2000, I became another new man.

I think I have finally found myself.

When you date, you are at your best. As soon as the preacher says, "I now pronounce you man and wife" (or something similar), you are a different person.

As the marriage goes through time and the two of you get used to each other, if you aren't careful the romance goes down, complacency goes up, and unless you do something to keep your partner's fire going, it may go out.

Sometimes the changes are bad for the marriage. Your partner may be the sweetest person you ever knew and as soon as you are married your partner may become controlling and abusive.

I have seen this happen many times. It took my second wife five years to become controlling, abusive, and extremely jealous. She tried to kill me twice. Luckily I started losing my business so I gave her everything, left, and went broke. This way I lost everything and all she lost was me.

Everything in this world that lives changes through its life. Change is a part of life. Change is a fact of life. Change keeps us alive and change ends our lives. Change keeps us out of a rut. We cannot grow without change.

### City Pogs

I was a veterinary assistant when I was thirteen. I learned how to handle any dog. The police used to come and get me to help them for calls to pick up stray dogs.

I think the top three dogs in the city are the pit bull, then the rottweiler and the Doberman. All three are unpredictable and dangerous around children. Their danger is in the same order as above.

The street dogs are in most cases mutts, many of them part German shepherd. These dogs live in the abandoned buildings. Many travel in packs but they usually leave people alone. I never had a problem with them. When I see them, I just stand still and do not show fear. I stare the leader down and they continue on their way.

I have never had a problem with the dogs. I had a pit bull run at me and I looked it in the eyes and yelled at it. I told it to get its f\_\_\_ing a\_\_ back in its f\_\_\_ing yard. It ran for its yard.

Normally when dogs are barking at me, I talk to them. If they get nasty, I bark back, but I get nastier with my barks. They either look at me like I am crazy or go hide. People with guard dogs hate it when a stranger gets the dog to calm down and they really get upset when the person pets the dog and the dog licks the stranger.

I had a friend that asked me to call him when I was going to walk by his house so he could put the dog in. It was a pit bull and he did not want to see how it acted when it saw me. I would go to the fence, it would run up to me, and I would pet it and it would lick my hand.

Anyone else it would bite. He did not want the kids in the neighborhood to try it.

A neighbor had a rottweiler that loved me. It never had a problem getting out of its fenced-in area. It was 3 a.m. and I was on the front porch having a cigarette. This dog snuck up behind me and on its hind legs wrapped its front legs around me. It felt like a man grabbing me from behind until it licked my ear.

A client had a rottweiler he said it never met a man it did not bite. He had a friend who was a mailman who said he could handle any dog and he wanted to pet it. The client said no, it would bite. The man tried anyway and ended up with 24 stitches on his hand. He said that the dog seemed to like me. I went to it, talked to it, and slowly brought the back of my hand to it. It licked my hand and I pet it.

Dogs can read a human. They can sense fear, love, and hate. Only show them love, never fear or hate.

I can't forget the cats of the streets. They too live in abandoned buildings. There may be hundreds of cats in a large abandoned warehouse or plant. With them sometimes you will see a few together or see them alone. Usually they stay away from people.

## How to Treat a Lady

I have been married twice and I have dated many women. Both wives and I have a mutual dislike for each other. The ex-girlfriends and I are in most cases still friends. Why is that? I did not know something I learned from the marriages until after it was too late. You've got to know when to hold them and when to fold them.

The sad part about marriage is divorce and what it does to the children. Staying together for the children is usually a mistake. The children sense the tension and that makes them tense. If you see your marriage going down the tubes, you may want to try to seek a counselor before it is too late. If that doesn't work, you may think about working together to find a way to end the marriage and save the friendship for the sake of the children.

As we grow older, our personalities change. When we go from dating to living together to marriage, we change. We have to realize that we are changing and listen to our partner when they tell us we are changing. If a change is for the bad, then we have to try to undo the change. This has to work both ways. If your partner is unwilling to listen, then think about ending it.

Now we get to how to treat a lady. The lady should also use this for how to treat a gentleman.

1. Honesty: Always tell the truth even when it hurts. Lies are too hard to keep track of and we will always be caught in a lie.

- 2. Faithfulness: If you see someone down the road that you would rather be with or if you want to test the waters, let your partner know that it is time for you to go. If you screwed up, maybe your partner will take you back, but don't hold your breath. It might be a good idea not to try the waters but stick with a sure thing.
- 3. Reliability: Always be there for your partner. Make sure they can depend on you when they need you. If you say you will do something, follow through.
- 4. Self-respect: Always build your partner's self-respect. Most women I have been out with have had a problem with men putting them down and abusing them. Many have had one or both their parents putting them down. You have to convince them that they are not stupid and help them obtain their maximum potential. (Both of my ex-wives told my parents that the greatest gift I gave them was their self-respect.)
- 5. Don't have sex but make love: Foreplay is the key here. Sometimes caressing and kissing are all that is needed. Make each time a little different than the last few times. Try new things and different places (hot tub, kitchen, backyard, back seat of the car, drive-in movie). Be inventive.
- 6. Romance: Never let it die. Flowers or a stuffed animal for no reason always help keep it going. Night out to dinner. A motel. The back row of a theater so you can make out.
- 7. Housework: If you are living together, the housework is not all of the woman's work. Share it based on the jobs you have. If you both work the same hours, the housework should be split evenly.
- 8. Children from a previous relationship: This is most important. If your partner has children, you are entering into a package deal. If you cannot get along with the children, don't even try a relationship with the mother. You have to love the children too. You have to win their love. Discipline is up to the mother. I never hit the children, but I do scold them. If you and your partner cannot agree on discipline, let it go.

I hope that what I have said has helped some couples. If you have decided to try harder to keep the relationship going or if you have decided it is not a relationship that should continue, I am happy. Like Kenny Rogers said, "You've got to know when to hold them and you've got to know when to fold them."

I would much rather see a bad relationship end with mutual understanding than to have it end with hatred. There are many cases where people can be in love when living apart and yet when they live together their love turns to hate. Before it turns to hate, pull apart and be friends. Each of you go your own way but know that you are there for each other in times of need.

# Why Me, God?

I am sure you have heard people say that. You may have said it yourself. If God were to answer I would bet He would say, "Because you are always saying why me."

When God put people on this earth, there were not many of them. By the time Christ came along there were only a few hundred thousand. People then had limited knowledge. For one thing they did not live long, so they did not have time to get real smart. Another thing is that they did not need it because there was not a lot to know. They only counted to 40 and if there were more than forty they just stopped at 40.

Back then God could handle the load without much help. He could hear the prayers, and I am willing to bet he had some help. He decided he needed big-time help, so he decided to have a son and train him in the business. We all know what happened next.

A little side bar here. I know a lot of you still blame the Jews for killing Christ. Remember Christ said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." I wasn't there, so I don't know if those are the exact words, but I think that is close. I am sure God did forgive them and I think we Christians should too. After all, I don't think anybody that was there is around now to persecute.

Back to my story.

As people started to multiply (luckily we did not have litters of kids), people had to get smarter. God was finding it harder and harder to keep up with all of the prayers even with the help of his Son's buddies.

The first thing he had to do was cut down the calls for curing the sick, so he gave some people the ability to find cures for the ill. I don't know who came up with the title "doctor" and frankly I don't care. If God did not want us to go to doctors, we would not have them.

We then had people coming up with ideas to make things to help us do our thing. This brought on the job. Soon we had to have people to sell the things we made. Then we needed stores. Sometime along here we needed money. People had to count higher.

Then we had to have time off from the jobs to rewind. The vacation industry started. The space programs brought in the PCs. Then I am here telling you this, and if you go to my mall, I will be selling you stuff.

In two thousand years we went from a few hundred thousand people to billions. Don't you think God would like us to cut the requests down? If I need something I do not ask God. I do it myself. If I am sick I look inside and fight the illness and, if needed, I see the doctor. If God did not want me to see a doctor, he would not have put them here.

When you are ill, have faith in God, but also have faith in yourself. Fight within and you have a good chance to beat it. Just say I am going to make it. When things get real bad, then it may be time to ask God for help and make your promises that if He helps you will be good. Just remember if He cures you, you better not forget your promises because He sure won't.

When it is time to go, though, it's time. Don't be afraid. If you are basically good, you will probably go to a better place and the pain will be gone. Don't try to go before it is time because you will not go to a better place.

I was at a party after a funeral.

One person said, "Be happy for her because she is in a better place."

Another said, "She was bad and probably went straight to hell." The first guy said, "That is a better place than where she was."

# Hypocrisy and the Church

I have a feeling that this one will piss some people off. They say do not discuss religion or politics because they lead into arguments that do not end or end in broken friendship. What I like about this forum is that I can say what I want and not listen to the people calling me a heathen.

I do not like people that go to church on Sunday and act holy and when they are out the door they talk about the other people and instead of being holier than thou they are unholier than thou. I don't like the way inner-city preachers soak the poor and go home to the suburbs in their limos. Many don't even visit those who are in the hospital. I am not saying that all churches are like this.

I do not like it when churches protect pedophile ministers by transferring them so they can continue to molest children. They cover up the wrongdoing in their church to protect their image and could care less about the victims.

I was raised as an Episcopal and as a teenager wanted to be an Episcopal minister. I became disenchanted with the churches and I now praise the lord in my own way. Yes, I do believe in God and Christ. I also believe in helping those who are in need.

I believe in happiness and living life in a way that I will be happy and spread my happiness to others. If I become a preacher, I will not preach a religion but a way of life. I will not preach damnation and hellfire but a life that will help you get to heaven. I will preach love and helping others find themselves. I will preach how you can always have a good day and a good life. I will preach a healthy attitude. I will

let assholes know what they are and let them know how to change their life before their hate and the hatred that others have for them destroys them.

I will not preach against any religion, but I will open my doors and heart to people of all religions and ethnic backgrounds. Though I am a Christian, I will not preach Christianity but love of God and love of man. I will ask people to learn from other religions and invite guests to come and tell about their religious beliefs.

I will not preach the Bible because I feel that it is not the word of God but the word of religious leaders, many of whom wrote for their benefit. I will preach from my heart and from my experiences in life.

The world needs love and it needs to have the religious leaders throughout the world tell their followers that just because a person has different beliefs they are not bad.

God is good. No one knows which religion is right. There is good in all religions that do not follow Satan. I feel those of all religions that praise God (no matter what name they use) can make it to heaven and receive God's blessing. Even those religions that have more than one god have his love because their gods are different faces of the one God.

Instead of fearing or hating people who are different let those differences add to your knowledge of life. Even if you disagree, remember that they disagree with you. Only God can judge not you. What is right may be somewhere in between.

There are people who say I am wrong. Some people believe in every word in the Bible. Which bible do they believe in? There are different versions and all of the versions have different meanings to different people. Who is right? Your version is right in your mind. That's fine with me. My beliefs are right for me. Only God knows. Maybe God doesn't care as long as you believe in Him.

I am going to say what I feel in my heart. If you agree, that is up to you. If you do not agree, that is your prerogative. (I love that word but I never knew there was an "r" after the "p.") You feel that you are right and I feel that I am right. I am sure that others feel they are right. Who's right? God is.

I love life and you can too.

You have probably heard people say life sucks. I guess sometimes they are right, but most of the time they suck. Some people can't take the bad things that come along in life. You have to learn to go with the flow and how to change the flow when you can. If you can't go with it and you can't change it, ignore it.

The world can be tough at times. Some folks say life's a bitch and it sure enough can be. You just have to put up with it. If you play the game right, you can roll with the punches and come out on top, well maybe close to the top.

Frankly, as long as I am above the bottom, I am happy. You get to the top and it can be a long fall. The lower you are, the shorter the fall.

Some say I do not have the drive and ambition. I had it. Whenever I got to the top, something knocked my butt down. Sometimes that was me. In both marriages the higher I got the worse the marriage got.

There is one thing I have learned (it is not the only thing, just one of the things). Don't sweat the small stuff and to hell with the big stuff.

I used to have heartburn all of the time. When I decided not to let anything bother me, the heartburn left.

I am self-employed so I do not have to take bullshit from a boss. I am good enough at what I do so that I do not have to take the bullshit from my clients.

If you realize that the material things are not important, you will have a better life. I live in a small downtown apartment within walking distance of some of the best entertainment in the world. I get buses to anywhere in the city within walking distance. Life is great for me because I do not worry about anything.

I have a good life because I make it a good life. I work at all hours out of my apartment. I have time to write. (From the end of January to April 15th I don't have a lot of time to write because of tax season, but I make time for it and the ladies.)

Of course I realize that many of you who are up there love your material things. If you are married, the odds are that the wife and kids love them too. I am not saying this is wrong. I am saying that if something happens, you may find yourself in a position where you will go down. It will probably be temporary, but at the time you will not know how long it will be.

Be prepared, not only you but your family too. Have an austerity plan. You do not know that your company will stay strong or that you will always be liked by your superiors. You may piss someone off that can knock you out of your job.

Always have an option in case you lose your job. Be involved in the organizations in your industry. If you are an automotive engineer, get involved with the Society for Automotive Engineers.

A large number of people work for small businesses. The owner may be the only one that can keep it going. He may end up in divorce, get critically ill, or in some other way find himself in a position where he will lose the company. He may have financing problems. You may have the orders but not the money to produce the product.

There are so many things that can burst your bubble. The wife may decide she doesn't like you anymore. Everything can be lost in a short time. If you are ready for it, you may not hurt so badly.

I have been talking about the man in a relationship but the same can apply to the working woman. The non-working (at a paying job) woman is in many cases dependant on her husband. She has to be ready in case he splits. Try to have a stash of money. No matter how much in love you are and you think he is, it can change almost overnight. Be prepared to start over again.

Get a job. It can be a part-time job that can be made into a full-time job if needed. You may want to get into real estate sales. You may want to start a business out of your home. If your husband asks why, tell him you want to have money of your own for gifts so he does not have to pay for his gifts from you. You are tired of asking him for money all of the time.

If you are prepared, it will not hurt as much if you lose your position in life. DO NOT BE AN ASSHOLE because if you are, when you go down no one will help. If you walked over people to get up the ladder, they will step on you when you are on your way down. Your misfortune will be their happiness. Be nice on your way up and help others. They may remember and help you recover.

Try to have a nest egg, not for a rainy day but to save your butt.

### Go for Cover

The kid across the street pulled a little girl's pants down. Her brother was the leader of the local gang. He went behind the kid's house and emptied his 357 magnum into the back of the house. A bullet went through the kitchen through a hallway, out through a window in the front door, and into our house through the living room window and stuck in the wall.

We moved a month later.

I was sitting on the porch one day. All of a sudden about 15 or 20 cars with DEA agents came up to the house across the street. There was a guy walking up to the house and suddenly he was laying face down on the ground, handcuffed.

Agents had their big old door buster and they were trying to break down the door. It would not budge. They went to the back and could not get in. They tried the windows and still could not get in. They took their prisoner, got in their cars, and drove off.

Five minutes later the dealer came out of his house and sat on the front porch. He lit up a joint. A neighbor came over with a six-pack and they enjoyed the beautiful summer day.

A couple of weeks later I was sitting on the front porch with my girlfriend, her cousin, and a friend. A big old Buick pulled up to the house same house and the people in the car opened fire on the house. We dove for cover. The Buick sped off.

Five minutes later the dealer came out of his house and sat on the front porch. He lit up a joint. A neighbor came over with a six-pack and they enjoyed the beautiful summer day.

I was stopped at a stoplight. It was 2:30 a.m. and the bars were closing. I was next to a police car and suddenly a shootout started at the White Castle on the other side of the intersection on my side of the street. They were shooting at the police car. Everyone turned around at one time and blended into the oncoming traffic. None of the cars hit each other.

I was in the Chicago Lounge. There was shooting down the street. The owner locked the door. People came up to the door and knocked. No one let them in because for all we knew they could be the shooters. The shootout was at my favorite Coney Island. One person was shot.

The shootings in Detroit are way down now. Downtown is a lot better and the neighborhoods are improving. One place I lived almost every night I would hear shooting. Some nights, kids would sleep under the bed instead of on it.

### Suicide Is Not the Answer

Are you down, depressed, deeply troubled, and in a world of hurt? Do you think no one loves you? Are you thinking that you can't take it anymore? Are you ready to say no to life?

I've been there and now I am happier than a pig in slop. Why? I have had an attitude readjustment. I do not let anything bother me. If a lady says no, I could care less. There are others out there. I don't worry about being alone. As long as I have me, I am not alone. I can be sure that I will never leave me.

No matter how bad things get, there is always a bright side. If you are on the top of the world, making good money, and have a family, nice home, and a lot of friends, then you lose it all. Don't go into a shell. Don't give up. I've been there and it was probably the best thing that ever happened to me.

When you are broke, you know who your friends are. When you are at the bottom, everything else is a step back up. When you are at the bottom, look around and meet the others that are down there with you. Take the time to smell the roses. Don't fall into the drug and alcohol trap.

Some of the best people you ever meet will be on the bottom too. Learn from them. Help them. They will help you.

Are you in a marriage that has gone bad and you don't know how to get out of it? You and your spouse are not the same people you were before you got married. People change over the years. Some of the little things that didn't bother you in the past cause a lot of problems now.

Your spouse doesn't understand you anymore and you understand them less.

You have children and you do not want to leave them, but the arguing is not only bringing you down but it is hurting the children.

Maybe it is time to go. You want out but you are afraid to lose the material things you have. They are not worth it. Try counseling first, and if that doesn't work, start thinking about an escape plan. The grass may not always be greener on the other side of the fence, but it might be. If not, you may be able to use some fertilizer and make it greener.

When we date, we are on our best behavior. When we live together, we let things out that we hid before. When we get married, even more comes out. Sometimes the change is for the good. Sometimes it is bad. I feel that the wedding vow should be, "as long as we both are who we were when we took these vows" instead of, "as long as we both shall live." Sometimes we are different people as the years go by and the love disappears.

It may be better for both of you to split up than to continue the charade. Even if you lose it all, it is better than ending everything.

Are you young and in school? Are some of the other kids teasing you because you are overweight or for some other reason? Don't let it get you down. They are the ignorant ones. You are the greatest. No one is better than you are. When I was in grade school, I was an overweight nerd. I was teased and called names. The favorite was banana barrel. I got to the point where I had to make a decision. I decided to hell with them all and ignored them. I realized that I was better than they were.

Why seek revenge when they are the ones that are fools? They are just jealous because I am going somewhere in life and they are going down. I am better than them. I started to hold my head up high and went on with my life knowing that I am me and that is a damn good thing.

No matter how bad things get or how bad other people get, you can make it better. Adjust your attitude to the situation. Always remember you are number one and things will get better. Get off your sorry butt and get to work to make things better for yourself.

Suicide is the end. No heaven, no earth, no everlasting life, just hell. Change your attitude, change your life, and you will find

happiness. Happiness is out there for you. There are some people out there that will help you make your life better.

I have died and been close to death three times. I know I want to live, but I am not afraid of death. I do know that if you take your own life, you will find hell and it will not be worth it. Change your life, don't throw it away. If you have a problem, there should be organizations in your area that can help. Look in the yellow pages or use the search engines on the net. You can find help.

# To Be or Not to Be Gay

This is a hard subject to tackle. First of all, I have met many gays in the last few years and I have come up with my conclusions based on what I have seen. My views have changed over the years. Now my opinion is that if you are gay, that is your business. If you want to come out of the closet, that is your option. I will not hold your sexual preference against you. My sexual preference is black women. To some that is as bad as being gay.

Until recent talk shows on the subject, what I am about to say was known by a few people. Sally Jesse Raphael did one or two shows on this subject. I feel it is still swept under the rug. There are babies born with both sets of sex organs. They are both male and female. In most cases the doctors did not say anything and eliminated one set of sex organs. In many cases I would imagine the male sex organs were seen by the parents and in many cases the doctor saw the male organs and did not notice the female organs until after saying it's a boy. They aren't going to say, "It's a boy.... It's a girl!"

If the parents think it's a boy, they will remove the female organs. If the parents do not know, they will make it a boy or a girl depending on how they feel. The odds are that they will be wrong fifty percent of the time. I feel that they should wait until the child exhibits its sexual orientation.

You have probably heard men that dress as women say that they are women trapped in men's bodies. People who changed their sex are more than likely people who were born both sexes and the doctor made the wrong call.

When I was with my second wife, her family gave parties that were attended by all types of people. One of the parties was for my father-in-law's retirement. We had two hundred twenty-five people show up out of the one hundred seventy-five we invited. There was this person on the dance floor that looked like the best looking woman on the floor. All of the men wanted to dance with her.

I was sitting with my ex-brother-in-law and he said, "See that woman with the short dress out there? I want to dance with her."

I said (no offense intended to the gays out there), "No, you do not want to dance with him."

He said, "Come on, Lee. Every man out there wants to dance with her. She is the most beautiful woman on the dance floor."

I reiterated, "You do not want to dance with him."

There was a long pause. You could almost see smoke coming out of his ears.

He finally said, "Him."

I answered with a great deal of sadness for my poor sad friend, "He came in with Uncle Johnnie and he has an Adam's apple."

I heard a sad, "Oh."

Uncle Johnnie (last I heard he is now Aunt Jonnie) was a real beauty in his day. He looked a lot like an older version of my ex-wife.

I asked him once why he did not come to our wedding. He told me that my mother-in-law (his sister) told him he could not come unless he wore a man's suit.

I told him that I would prefer that he came dressed as a woman. In a man's suit he would look like a lesbian. I would have introduced him to my parents, brother, and others that were there from my side as Aunt Jonnie. They would have never known the difference.

Uncle Johnnie had more up top than my ex-wife had. He was taking hormones and they were doing a good job. She used to take her new boyfriends to his place and leave them with him while she would visit the lady downstairs. If she heard the scream of a man, she knew that the guy had his hands in the wrong place, so she would get rid of him.

Uncle Johnnie and his friends would be at the family parties and they would be a lot of fun. I learned a lot from them and my whole attitude toward gays has changed.

There are many gays who you do not know are gay. There are

many you think are gay that are not. I do not judge them. People say the Bible says they are sinners. They use this to discriminate against them. I feel that they are in many, if not most, cases born that way. Many were born both sexes and the doctor made the wrong decision. Many were born with the wrong sex organs. Many are men that like men or women that like women.

It seems to me that they are God's children just like straight people are. They in most cases did not choose their sexual orientation.

I am more comfortable with black people than with white. I was born white but it I feel that I was supposed to be black. I have had two psychics tell me that I was supposed to be black. Most of my black friends say it too. My white friends also feel the same way.

Those that say gays are sinful would say I am too because I have sex with black women.

## Viva La Diferencia

The United States is a melting pot. Even the Native Americans came from Asia (Mongolia) when Alaska and Russia were connected. We are all Americans. Christians, Jews, Muslims, and people with other religions who were born here or have been naturalized are Americans. People who came from (or whose ancestors came from) Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, South America, or the rest of North America and are citizens are Americans. Citizens of all colors are Americans.

It is time that those who say that only white Anglo-Saxon Protestants are the only ones who have a right to be here realize that their ideology is ignorant and has no basis in fact. Prejudice is the product of ignorance. These people are afraid of what they do not understand. Most who live in poverty blame their poverty on those whom they are prejudice against. They do not realize that they would be just as poor if their targets were not here.

What makes this country great is that we accept people of all religions and ethnic backgrounds. We do not force them to blend in with our society if they do not want to.

It is time for Christians to realize that they are the minority religion on this earth. It is time for whites to realize they are minorities on this earth. It is time for us all to learn about other cultures and religions. It is time for all people to accept all other people.

Do not condemn all whites for the actions of a few. Do not condemn all of any race for the actions of a few. The same goes for religions and ethnic backgrounds. If God condemned a group

because of the action of a few in that group, we would all go to hell.

We are all brothers and sisters. We are all human. We all have to learn to live together as equals because if we don't we are doomed to more wars and terrorism.

Help stamp out bigotry. Ignore bigots. When a friend uses racial slurs let him or her know that you do not like it and stay away from them. Do not get caught up in the ignorance of bigotry.

The attack on our country was by fanatics backed by a man who has money and is power hungry. This man convinces his followers that they are in a holy war against the devil. He has convinced them to sacrifice their lives on Earth for the cause and in return they will have everlasting life as a hero in heaven. They will go to hell and their leaders will go to hell.

The Muslim religion is a peaceful religion and they do not believe in killing innocent civilians. We have made Israel one of the strongest nations on Earth and that power has gone to their leaders' heads. Their present leader had a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon massacred. He defiled their holy mosque. He is having his troops kill kids whose only crime is that they want freedom. You do not answer rocks with bullets.

It is time for our country to put a muzzle on these power-hungry leaders and force Israel to withdrawal from the Palestinian territory. Since they cannot agree on Jerusalem, don't let any country control it. Set up a council represented equally by the Muslims, Jews, and Christians to govern the city. It should be a sovereign city-state like the Vatican.

It is time for the people of the world to tell their leaders that it is time for peace. Those of you on the Internet are meeting people from all over the world from all different ethnic groups. You are the ones who can work for peace and tell others that hatred is killing our world.

Talk to those who are different. Learn about their religions and customs. I think you will find that even though there are many differences, there are also many similarities. We all have the same God. Even those who have more than one god are worshiping different faces of our God. Our God is the ruler of heaven and earth. Their gods have different areas or parts of life that they are in charge of.

The key my friends is this: WE ARE ALL EQUAL BUT WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT.

Viva la diferencia.

## Can the World Have Peace?

Is 9-11 bringing the world together? Will peace come to the Middle East? Are the leaders getting sick of bloodshed? Can we Internet junkies help by talking to people all over the world? Can people of different religions show that we all have the same goal: peace?

God gave us the ability to think, analyze situations, decide what is good and bad, and decide whether we will be good or bad. We have the ability to love and hate. We have the ability to listen to others and to listen to reason. We also have the power to ignore the truth and choose the bullshit over the truth and what is right. We can be broadminded or narrow-minded.

We have to fight hate. We have to fight prejudice. We have to promote God's law that says we must love thy neighbor.

Terrorism has to be defeated. While that fight is going on, we, the citizens of the world, have to fight hate. We have to let our nations' leaders know that it is time for peace.

People of Israel, let your leaders know that it is time to let the Palestinians have their country. It is time for your troops to pull out of the Palestinian territory. Have Jerusalem become a religious state (like the Vatican) governed by the religions that consider it a holy city. No country should rule the city that is holy throughout the world.

People of the Arab states, let your leaders know that it is time to let Israel have peace as long as they stay in their borders and leave you alone.

Americans, let your leaders know that you are fed up with war. Let them know that from this date forward, the only war is the war

against the terrorists. If no more money or weapons will be given to Israel or any other nation to fight wars, we will help peaceful nations and innocent victims of war. If one country attacks another, we will help the nation that is attacked.

People of the world, tell your leaders that you want peace and that you will not put up with aggression against other countries.

People of all religions, let your leaders know that God is a god of peace no matter what his name is. Tell your leaders that you want them to mend the fences with other religions and to realize that their religion is not the only legitimate religion in the world. As long as a people believe in God, no matter what name for Him or what religion they are, they will have the same chance at heaven as the people of all other religions.

Protestants and Catholics of Northern Ireland, tell your ministers and priests that it is time to realize that you are all God's children and that unless you put a stop to the fighting, they are going straight to Hell.

Americans, it is time to show the narrow-minded bigots of this country that Americans of all races, religions, nationalities, and ethnic backgrounds have the same rights as everyone. We are all Americans and we are all God's children. We are all equal even though we are different. Try to learn about the differences and also the similarities.

People of the world, do the same in your countries.

When you are walking down the street, smile and say, "Hi, how are you today?" to everyone you see and if they say, "Fine, how are you?" answer, "Fine, thank you." Smile while you walk and watch others start to smile.

Always be happy and the happiness will spread. I make sure that every day is a good day and I make it a point to help others smile. Happiness is contagious.

FIGHT HATRED AND YOU WILL BRING PEACE TO EARTH.

## I Am Poor, but I Am Rich

My hair turned gray in my early thirties (my first wife's gift to me). I got my high blood pressure in my early forties (my second wife's gift to me). I got my arthritis and skin cancer in my early fifties (my gifts to me).

Now I can't drive because I fall asleep when I drive and it is hard to get in and out of a car, so I use those big long limos the local governments supply for fifty dollars a month.

I walk as much as I can. (Some days I have to rest my legs every other block.)

If someone comes along that wants to do me harm, I just look at them like I will kill them if they try anything. I can't run, so I have to look and act crazy and scare them away. It works because I have no fear and they realize it.

I am not afraid of pain or death. For the last two years I have been in pain when I walk and sometimes when I lay down. I died a couple of times in my life. I do not care about money. So I have nothing to lose.

I owe \$1,400 in credit cards and \$15,000 in medical bills and I have less than \$1,000 in assets. I make less than \$15,000 a year.

I have a lot of friends, and because of what I have, I don't wonder what they want. They all know that all I have to give is my heart. (Maybe that is why it is enlarged.)

## The Human Rainbow

Anthropologists have said that in 500 years there will be one race. Many think that will mean the end to prejudice. The sad fact is that prejudice is more color than race. Even within a race there is prejudice between colors; in the black race you have high yellow at one end to very dark at the other end. In the white race you have prejudice with color too, but there is more prejudice about religion and nationality with the white race. Their color prejudice is more against non-whites.

I am here to say that there is no reason for prejudice. We are all humans. There are good and bad among all people.

Over the past 20 years I have lived with mostly black people. In many cases I would be the only white person there; I have rarely had a problem. I date black women. I am not prejudice against white women. One of my best friends is a white woman. I just prefer black women.

I am more comfortable with blacks than I am with whites because of problems I have had with whites when I was with my black ex-wife and because I have been with blacks more than whites. What attracts me to black women? Number one is the booty. Number two is the various colors. Number three is that I can talk easier with a black woman that a white woman. Like I say, I do not dislike white women. If I see a beautiful white woman, I will say that she is a beautiful woman.

There is a woman that I have been close to over the years. One time we were both unattached. We were talking about getting together. We were at a party and I was at the pool table.

A man asked, "Why aren't you with your own kind?" She said, "I am, we are both humans."

A few minutes later a man came to us and said, "I'm a Vietnam veteran. (I have nothing against Vietnam veterans. I volunteered for Vietnam but failed the physical in 1964. Usually when a man is drunk and says that the conversation will be negative.) If I go to a white bar with a white woman, I would have a problem. A bigot would want to fight. You go into a black bar with a black woman you don't have a problem."

I said, "It looks like I have a problem now."

He apologized and left. My lady was upset and left.

The next week there was another party. At 1:00 a.m. she came in. (It was like a romance movie.) Everybody stopped and cleared a path for her to come to me. It was like she was running in slow motion. We took each other's hands and walked to the dance floor. We were the only ones on the dance floor and the disc jockey said, "This song is dedicated to the 'Gray Fox' and his lady Jonnie."

Everybody watched us dance. After the dance we decided to just be good friends and to this day we are good friends.

Sorry about the ending, but it was a true story and truth is not perfect. The story shows in a small scale the problem mixed couples have.

My son came home one day and said, "Mama, am I black or am I white?"

She said, "You are black."

He put his arm next to mine and it was lighter than mine. He said, "Mama, if I am black then Daddy's black."

We are all human. That is what counts. The 1990 census asked for race and nationality. What difference does it make, we are all in the human race. Then they said if you are Hispanic mark that, no matter what your race is. In other words they want to dilute the minorities even further. That means fewer blacks were counted. They need an instruction book just to decide what you are. (The 2000 census corrected it and you could check both Hispanic and your race.) I never filled out the 1990 census (call me a bad guy, but it is a bunch of questions that promote racism). Why not just count people?

The census taker came to my house and said, "Who lives here?" I answered, "My wife, my child, and I."

He asked, "What is your wife's race?"

I said, "Mutt."

He said, "You have to give me one race."

I said, "She is not one race, she is 60% black, 30% Native American and 10% white."

He said, "She is black."

More than 50%, I'll give that to him.

"What race is your son?" Now that is a stupid question.

I tried again, "Mutt. He is 55% white 15% Native American and 30% black. I would say if you had to pick, it would be white. Because of society he is black. His birth certificate says black." (Today in Michigan he could have either black or white because he looks white but is mixed with black.)

We are the entire human race. Why is everyone so preoccupied with race? God doesn't care. Why should we? I would love to see the look on the redneck's face when God tells him Jesus was a Jew and black.

## Love Yourself

When I talk to people who are down and out, they almost always have low self-esteem. I do what I can to help build their self-esteem. It is surprising how many intelligent people have lost their way in life.

In order to succeed in love or life for that matter, you have to have self-esteem. Low self-esteem gives you a defeatist attitude that leads to defeat. High self-esteem leads to success. You may have setbacks, but if you have high self-esteem you will not give up.

If you see someone you want to be with, and if you do not love yourself, you cannot sell yourself to the one you want to be with.

There are so many times that we have to sell ourselves. A job interview is one. Asking someone out on a date is another.

If you cannot sell yourself on yourself, how do you expect to sell anyone else on you or your ability?

A client told me one time that he could never do my work. He said he envied me sometimes. I told him that I could not do his job. We all have our bad points and our good points.

Always remember that no one is better than you are. They may do some things better than you but you can do things better than they can.

Love is a four-way street. You not only have to love each other, but you have to love yourselves too.

## I Love Life and You Can Too

You have probably heard people say, "life sucks." I guess sometimes they are right, but most of the time they suck. Some people can't takes the bad things that come along in life. You have to learn to go with the flow and how to change the flow when you can. If you can't go with it and you can't change it, ignore it.

The world can be tough at times. Some folks say "life's a bitch," and it sure enough can be. You just have to put up with it. If you play the game right, you can roll with the punches and come out on top, well, maybe close to the top.

Frankly, as long as I am above the bottom, I am happy. You get to the top and it can be a long fall. The lower you are, the shorter the fall.

Some say I do not have the drive and ambition. I had it. Whenever I got to the top, something knocked my butt down. Sometimes that was me. In both marriages, the higher I got, the worse the marriage got.

I am happier now than I ever was. I made good money, had big houses, had two families. I had my ups and downs. I was happier during the downs.

I control my income. If I wanted to add clients, I could, but I am semi-retired.

I am financially poor but I am wealthy. How can I say that? I have good friends and I am never sad. I have touched many people and I have made a difference in their lives. I have helped people find themselves. I have helped people eliminate the hatred in their hearts for others who are different than themselves.

I am happy about my age. Every day I am a day older and a day wiser. I enjoy writing and hearing from people that have been helped by it.

I do not worry about the future. I do not worry about getting older. Age is the number of years that you have been on this earth. It has nothing to do with who and what you are. It is what you have done with your life that matters.

I have done many things I am not proud of and I have learned from my mistakes. January 1, 2000, was the beginning of a new life for me. I have wiped the slate clean, and except for my business, I started over. I want to help others overcome their problems and start a new life too. I want to help others out of the holes they dug for themselves. I want to help them find themselves.

The most important things you learn will not be from school but from life. Look at the world around you, not just your neighborhood. With the Internet you have the world at your fingertips. If you are a parent, study about drugs and what they do to the addict. If you are thinking about trying drugs, look it up on the Internet. Find out what can happen to you.

My background is an unusual life. I spent my life studying people. I spent a lot of time in the streets. I have known people with high incomes and I have known people with no incomes. I have known good people and bad people. My education is not from books, surveys, and scientific studies, but from the real world.

The Crazy Old White Man was the street name given to the author when he lived in the hood. It is about his life and how he became The Crazy Old White Man and those who were a part of his life during that time. You will get a look at the drug culture and the streets of Detroit. You will meet addicts and people of the streets. The author pulls no punches and is honest and straightforward about the events in his life. There are some success stories and some failures. There are some laughs and some tears. It is real life, and it shows that the people of the streets are normal people who may have made a wrong turn in life. They are lost souls who need to find themselves.



I am Lee Gaylord, AKA The Crazy Old White Man, AKA Mr. Lee, AKA Eazy Lee, AKA Santa Claus. I have been on the way up and on the way down. I have studied people from all walks of life.

I am a reformed drunk, not a recovering alcoholic. I no longer have the urge to drink alcohol. It is my

goal to help the lost souls of our society find themselves and lift themselves out of the pits into which they have fallen.



